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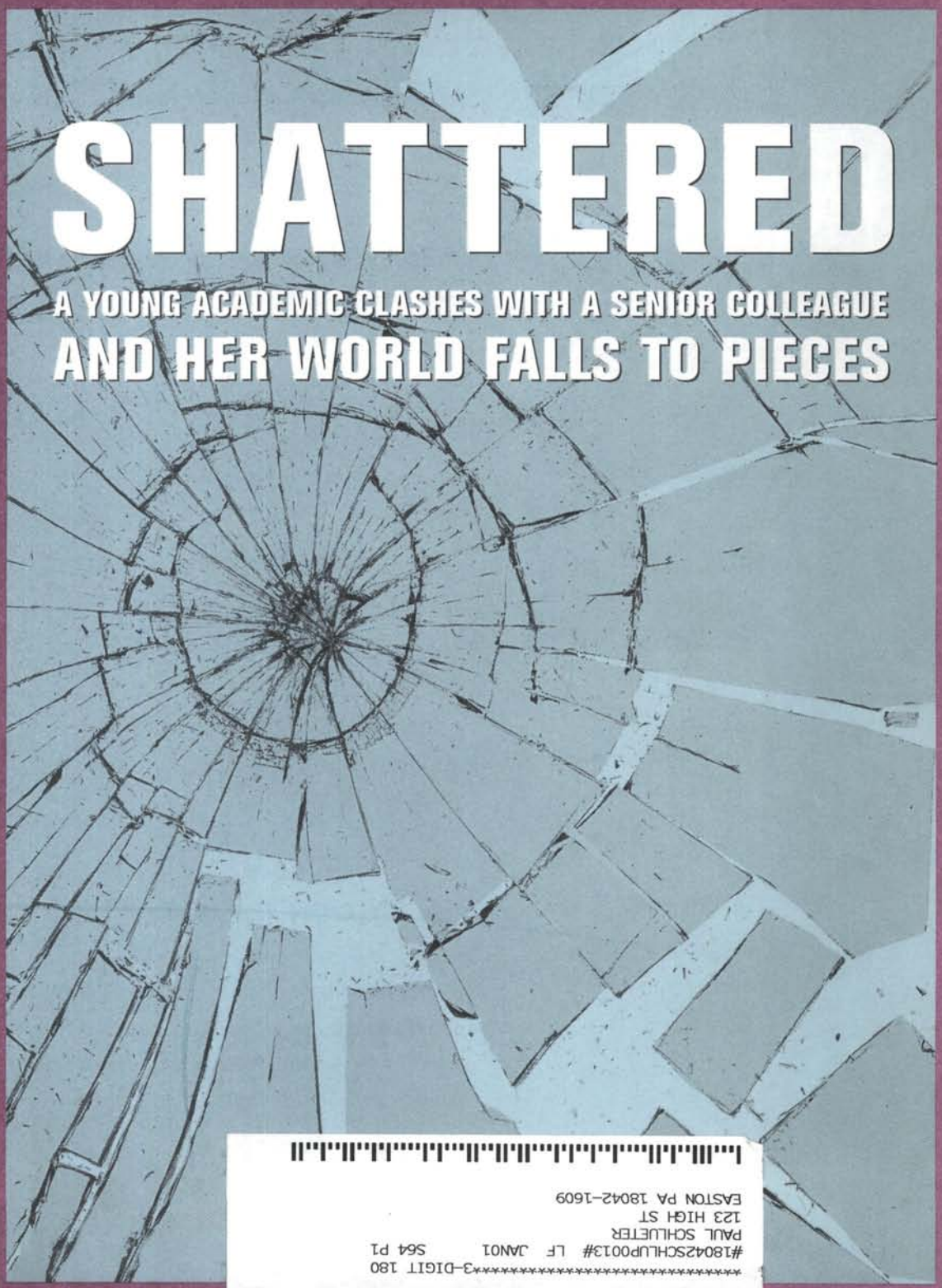

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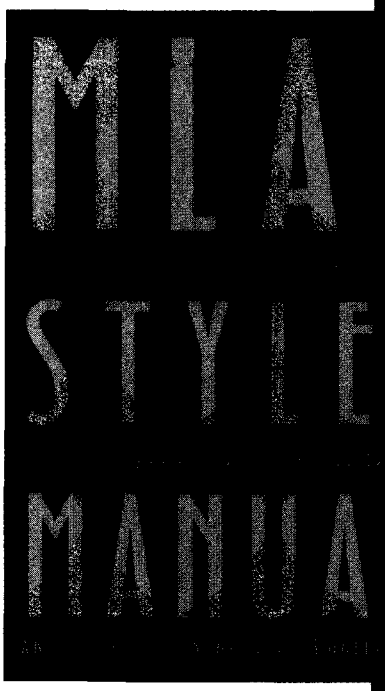

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A psychology professor at Frostburg State University, Bill Southerly *recently won the Faculty Achievement* Award for his development of the TIPS (Teaching in the Psychological Sciences) listserver, an internet-based discussion group.

Michael Atkinson has twice been elected Psychology Professor of the Year at the University of Western Ontario. The author of numerous articles and books, he frequently lectures on *learning in higher education.*

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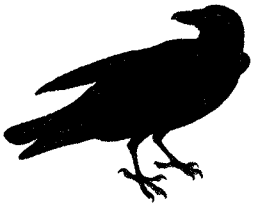

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A mixed language or jargon used in the Levant, consisting largely of Italian words deprived of their inflexions. Also transf. *Any mixed jargon formed as a medium of intercourse between people speaking different languages.* Fig. *1870* LOWELL, Among my bks. *Ser. I. 170 "What concern have we with the shades of dialect in Homer or Theocritus, provided they speak the spiritual* lingua franca *that abolishes all alienage of race?"*

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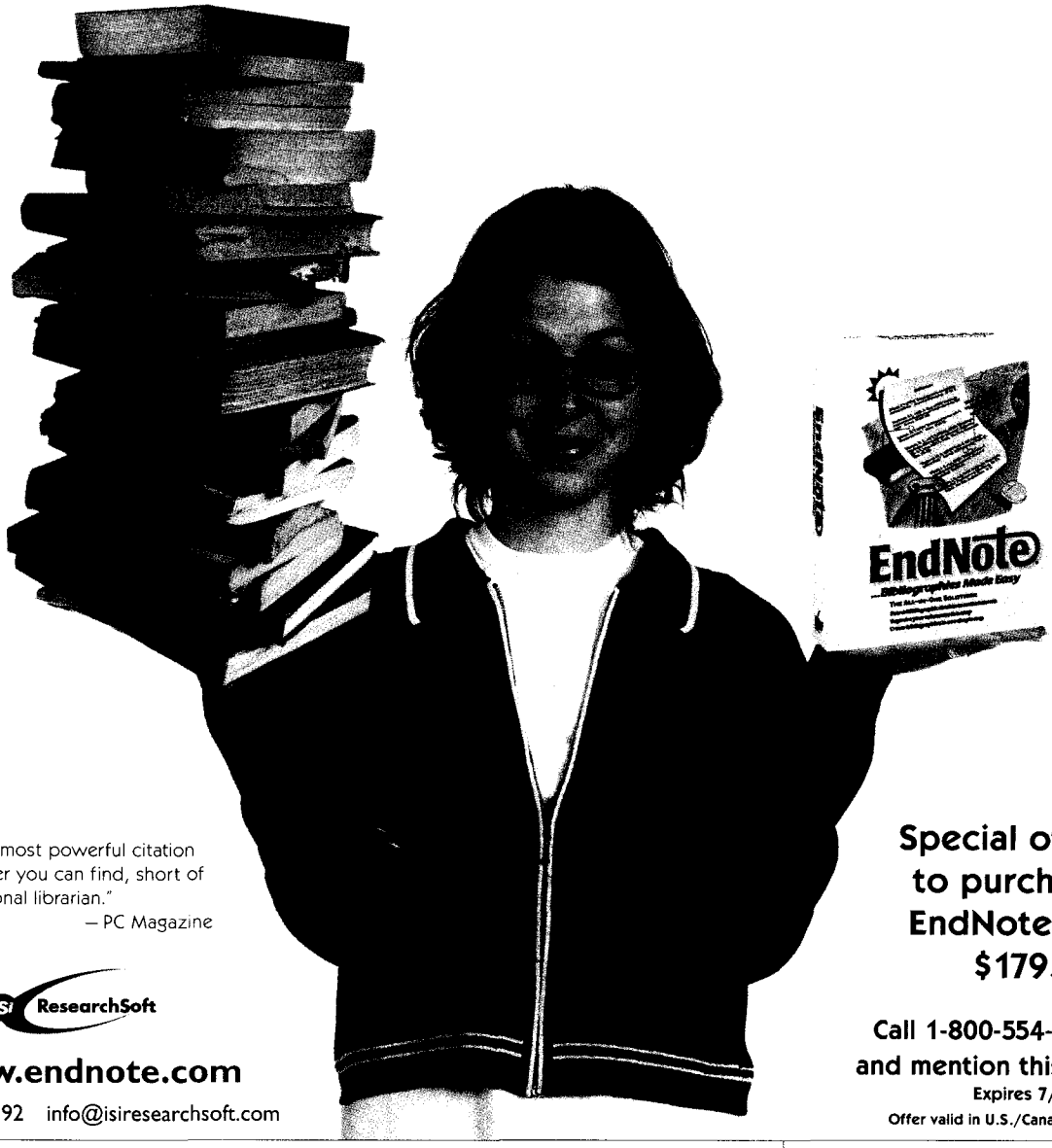

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THE GHOSTWRITER

Paul Mitchinson's article dealing with my works ["The Shostakovich Variations," May/June] omits or distorts facts that do not fit his preconceptions.

Mitchinson largely dismisses *Shostakovich Reconsidered*, a volume edited by Allan B. Ho and Dmitry Feofanov, which marshaled a huge amount of evidence in support of the authenticity of *Testimony,* Dmitri Shostakovich's memoirs, which I ghostwrote. This brief letter is no place to recount the contents of the exhaustively researched 787-page book—it speaks for itself.

My objection lies elsewhere: Mitchinson tries to create the impression that all my collaborative books were published after the deaths of their subjects, thereby casting doubt on their provenance. He never tells the reader that my book with Nathan Milstein appeared when the great violinist was alive and well and met with his full approval. Mitchinson also fails to mention another of my books of interviews, *Yuri Lyubimov in America,* published in 1992. Its subject, the famous Russian director, happily is still working in the theater at eighty-three.

Mitchinson doesn't report that my book of interviews with George Balanchine was endorsed by the choreographer's closest associates, such as Lincoln Kirstein and Barbara Horgan, the executor of Balanchine's estate. He also ignores the fact that my conversations with Joseph Brodsky—over thirteen years on at least fourteen occasions—appeared in print during the poet's lifetime, twice in book form. Brodsky was notoriously contentious, never shy to express his displeasure publicly, yet he voiced no complaints about these publications. He considered this endeavor my project, not his.

Conversations With Joseph Brodsky received support from such old friends of the poet as Anatoly Nayman, Yakov Gordin, and Vyacheslav Ivanov (the last two contributing introductions to the Russian-language editions of the book). It seems that the only person who objects is the poet's widow, Maria Sozzani-Brodsky, via the Brodsky estate. And that is a dispute not about provenance—it is about interpreting the poet's life.

SOLOMON VOLKOV
New York, NY

Paul Mitchinson responds: In 1987, Joseph Brodsky wrote that there was a "MASS of purely stylistic RUBBISH" in Solomon Volkov's published interviews with him. It seems fair to call this a complaint.

As for Shostakovich, the central question remains unanswered, by both Volkov and *Shostakovich Reconsidered*: What is *Testimony*? Is it one of Volkov's "collaborative books"? Is it "my project, not his," like *Conversations with Joseph Brodsky*? Or is it, as the dust jacket declares, the "memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich"?

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

While discussing *Oliver Stone's USA* and the dialogue that takes place within it ["Natural Born Historian," Inside Publishing, April], Paul Mitchinson manages to misquote me in a very fundamental way. The crux of his criticism claims that I "told the *Dallas Morning News* the film would be 'a history lesson'"—which would *seem* a contradiction of my self-description as a "dramatist" and not a "historian."

In checking out the *Dallas Morning News,* we find the actual context of the quotes is: "I'm not doing a school lesson here, and I don't have a documentarian's responsibilities. I have a dramatist's responsibilities to an audience"; and "I was out in Dallas the other night and talking to two young, beautiful girls of 21, 22—intelligent. They did not know who Jack Ruby or Lee Oswald was. They did not. It's shocking. It's important that we get this history lesson out there." In other words, the issue lies not with my being a historian but in the younger generation's ignorance.

When you read the entire book, I don't think you will miss my larger point.

OLIVER STONE
Santa Monica, CA

DEATH OF UTOPIA GREATLY EXAGGERATED

In her otherwise agreeable review of Robert Fogarty's latest book on the Oneida Community ["All in the Family," April], Barbara Packer implies that Oneida is the only community that "stands out for its long life and prosperity" amid an American landscape "littered

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Field Notes

FOWL PLAY

IN NOVEMBER 1999, *NATIONAL Geographic* hailed a 125-million-year-old fossil as the long-sought missing link between birds and dinosaurs. The specimen "takes my breath away," enthused the magazine's writer. "Its long arms and small body scream 'Bird!' Its long, stiff tail...screams 'Dinosaur!'" *Archaeoraptor liaoningensis*, he argued, was the most stunning of several recent finds from China's Liaoning Province, and the creature's remains helped confirm the disputed theory that birds evolved from the meat-eating branch of the dinosaur family.

As it turned out, the writer's sense of amazement was all too appropriate. Though he didn't know it at the time, he was in fact examining at least two distinct fossils: a bird and a dino. Someone—possibly an indigent Chinese farmer trying to make a buck—had glued a dromaeosaur's tail to the body of a primitive winged animal. And somehow, prominent paleontologists and science journalists fell for it.

The brief, unhappy flight of *Archaeoraptor* began in February 1999, when Stephen Czerkas, an amateur paleontologist who runs the Dinosaur Museum in Blanding, Utah, spent eighty thousand dollars at a mineral and fossil show in Tucson, Arizona. Czerkas bought what he thought was an important specimen. Shortly thereafter, he asked Philip Currie, a curator at the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology in Alberta, Canada, to assist him in writing a paper on it. Currie agreed. A regular source for *National Geographic*, Currie also passed along word of the discovery to the magazine.

In the summer, Czerkas and Currie invited two others to join their project: Tim Rowe,

STEPHEN CZERKAS AT WORK; FEATHERED FOSSIL (INSET)

O. LOUIS MAZZATENTA/NGS IMAGE COLLECTION (2)

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a professor of geological science at the University of Texas at Austin, and Xu Xing, a Chinese paleontologist.

Here accounts begin to diverge. Rowe, who today blames Czerkas for "the sordid affair," ran CAT scans on the fossil in his laboratory. He says the scans clearly showed that the specimen was compromised. Czerkas, however, says that Rowe's account is an unseemly display of twenty-twenty hindsight. It was evident even to the naked eye that several parts of the fossil did not fit together cleanly, Czerkas grants. But he argues that pieces of a fossil are often unearthed separately and mounted together later.

Rowe also insists that Czerkas failed to tell him that he had bought the fossil at a commercial show—an important fact, because it meant that the specimen had almost certainly been removed from China illegally. Czerkas says he has a paper trail showing that the fossil was acquired in an aboveboard manner.

In mid-August a *National Geographic* spokeswoman contacted the editors of the leading science journal *Nature*. According to e-mail saved by a participant in the controversy, she asked if *Nature* would speed up the peer review on a paper about *Archaeoraptor* (which the authors had not yet submitted) so that *National Geographic* could write on the discovery. Annoyed at the presumption, *Nature* rebuffed the spokeswoman.

Czerkas, Rowe, Xu, and Currie then submitted their paper to *Science*, whose two reviewers were singularly unimpressed. One pointed out that *Archaeoraptor* was very likely a black-market specimen and, noting the fault lines, raised the possibility that the dinosaur-like tail did not belong with the birdlike body. Czerkas scrambled to find a last-minute publisher—to no avail.

At this point, *National Geographic*'s editors knew the paper had been rejected, but they did not know the substance of the reviewers' reports, and they elected to keep *Archaeoraptor* in their article "Feathers for T. Rex?" The piece described *Archaeoraptor* and three other fossils recently discovered in China and Mongolia. "We can now say that birds are theropods [meat-eating dinosaurs]," the magazine crowed, "just as confidently as we say that humans are mammals." (At the same time, the magazine did require Czerkas to return the specimen to Chinese authorities, which he did in April.)

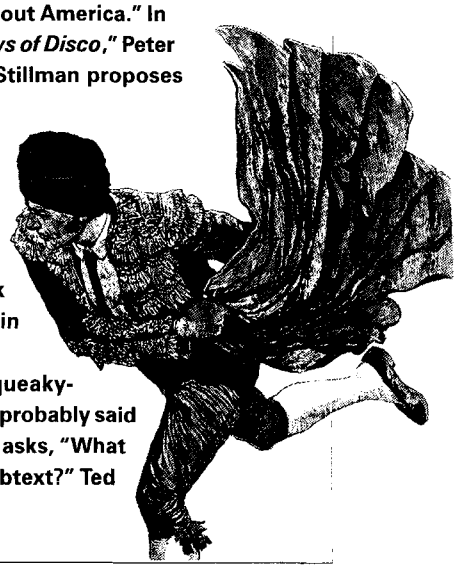
Why did National Geographic fall for a phony fossil? Was the magazine too eager to believe birds descended from dinosaurs?

Even before rumors about the fossil's authenticity began to circulate, "Feathers for T. Rex?" caused near aneurysms in the small group of scientists who insist that birds are evolutionarily distinct from dinosaurs. Storrs Olson, the curator of birds at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History, fired off a letter to the magazine characterizing its piece as "sensationalistic, unsubstantiated, tabloid journalism." He also blasted the editors for featuring an "illicit" fossil and noted that they had committed a taxonomic faux pas by bestowing a scientific name on a creature in a journalistic forum. (This wasn't the first time *National Geographic* had angered Olson's camp. After the magazine put a feathered dino on its June 1998 cover, Alan Feduccia, a professor of biology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, threw away three decades' worth of *National Geographics* he had stored in his house.)

It was in December that the fossil discovery crumbled into pieces. After several months of sleuth work, Xu Xing sent back

HOMAGE TO BARCELONA

CONSERVATIVE ACADEMIC JOURNALS AREN'T KNOWN FOR THEIR film criticism. So why did the *Intercollegiate Review* dedicate more than half of its spring 2000 issue to the work of director Whit Stillman? "Whatever Whit Stillman's politics may be," writes Mark C. Henrie in the symposium's introduction, "the very form of his artistic sensibility illuminates what an imaginative conservative cultural intervention in our time might entail." In the essays that follow, contributors explain how *Metropolitan* illustrates the crisis of today's "abandoned generation" on campus and how *Barcelona* contrasts European decadence to all that is "best about America." In "Nature, Grace, and *The Last Days of Disco*," Peter Augustine Lawler shows how Stillman proposes friendship and marriage as remedies for "the deprivation at the heart of bourgeois life." In "Whit Stillman: Poet of the Broken Branches," James Bowman tells us how Stillman's films offer a "not unhopeful look at the prospects for innocence in our time."



Perhaps. But *Barcelona*'s squeaky-clean protagonist, Ted Boynton, probably said it best. When his cynical cousin asks, "What do you call what's above the subtext?" Ted calmly responds, "The text."

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The peer review process kept the Piltdown chicken from appearing in the distinguished pages of Science magazine.

word from China that *Archaeoraptor* was a faked specimen. The evidence was plain: In a private collection, he had found the dinosaur fossil from which the tail had been taken.

The magazine's critics pounced on the revelation. Olson, for instance, says *National Geographic*'s dogmatism on the bird-dinosaur question has derailed the publication's otherwise cautious editorial system. The magazine's editors "are very much to blame," he says. "They created the climate for this to happen."

In fact, the editors were none too happy. In early January, *National Geographic*'s editor in chief, Bill Allen, sent an e-mail to the scientists involved saying that their "concealment of information" had been "so outrageous as to leave me enraged and virtually speechless." On February 17, *Nature* called the case "the classic example of the danger to science of amateurs dealing in smuggled specimens." *National Geographic* defended itself aggressively, arguing that it had made the best possible decisions with the information it had. In early April, the magazine convened a panel of experts to examine the evidence, which confirmed that the specimen was "a composite." The magazine plans to present an account of what happened—including the committee's conclusions—in its October issue.

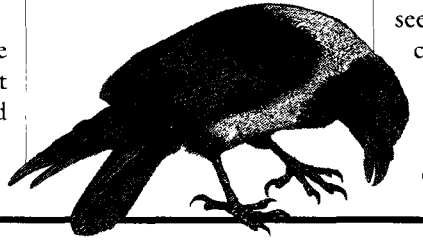
In retrospect, everyone seems to have assumed that someone else had checked what needed checking. Rowe says the only reason he got involved with such a shady fossil was that "it came to us with the National Geographic Society's backing." Meanwhile, Chris Sloan, who wrote the story for the magazine, says, "We really put our trust in the expertise of the scientists examining the specimen."

Amid the furor, it's easy to miss that the system worked, at least as far as the scientific journals go. *National Geographic* may have dinosaur egg on its face, but peer review kept the Piltdown chicken out of *Science*. In some quarters, however, the creature christened by *National Geographic* is not likely to go away anytime soon. Creationist Web sites, like www.answersingenesis.org, have covered every twist in the controversy—gleefully holding up *Archaeoraptor* as evidence that all of modern paleontology is a chimera.

CHRISTOPHER SHEA

COUNTING CROWS

CENSUS 2000 IS WINDING down, but the information gatherers have neglected to count an entire segment of the U.S. population—one whose numbers swell, depending on the estimate, to as many as 70 million! These most important members of society are, of course, laboratory animals.

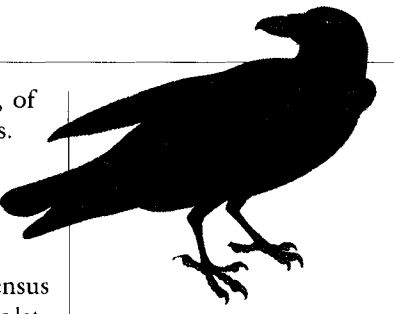


Luckily, the Animal Welfare Act instructs the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to hold a lab-animal census annually. According to the latest count (1998), there are 1,213,814 animals in lab care. Breaking animals down by species, the census reports the following:

Rabbits	287,523
Guinea pigs	261,305
Hamsters	206,243
Other animals	142,963
Pigs	76,568
Dogs	76,071
Primates	57,377
Other farm animals	53,671
Sheep	27,381
Cats	24,712

This is hardly a complete accounting, however. You might notice that such ever-popular lab animals as rats, mice, and birds are omitted from enumeration, resulting in a skewed total. Indeed, both the Foundation for Biomedical Research and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) estimate that uncounted animals make up at least 80 to 90 percent of all those used in scientific and medical research, prompting PETA to tabulate the total number of animals employed by science at 17 to 70 million.

But is there a better way of counting? The American Anti-Vivisection Society (AAVS) and its scientific affiliate, the Alternatives Research and Development Foundation, protest the government's exclusion of "lower" species. More than a year ago, they filed suit against the USDA, seeking to make the agency comply with what they believe to be the Animal Welfare Act's original intent. According to AAVS outreach director Dean



Why doesn't the government count rats, mice, and birds?

Smith, the problem lies with the definition of the word "animal." Smith argues that when amendments to the 1966 Animal Welfare Act were debated in Congress in 1970, it was unclear whether mice, rats, and birds were meant to be covered. Secretary of Agriculture Clifford Hardin finally used his administrative authority to exclude those species from the animal census.

One argument for the exclusion of these species is that counting them would create too much paperwork. Disgruntled scientists from Great Britain, one of several nations where mice and rats are counted by the government, have argued exactly that. USDA officials add that if rats and mice are counted in the census, then the department would be forced to regulate their care, stretching its budget too thin. Dick Watkins of the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service speculates that his $10 million budget might have to double in order to look after rats and mice.

In the meantime, Watkins is busy monitoring plenty of other species. The USDA's "other animals" category includes ferrets, woodchucks, armadillos, chinchillas, horses, spotted hyenas, and opossums.

HILARY RUSS

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GOT GOD?

SHOULD A PROFESSOR WHO has publicly stated "I am no longer a Christian" be allowed to teach theology?

For the last two years, the German theologian Gerd Lüdemann has been quarreling with his university and his church over this question. Lüdemann sparked the controversy in 1998, when he published a shockingly frank "Letter to Jesus" in the German weekly *Der Spiegel*. Addressing the Savior himself, Lüdemann wrote: "You weren't without sin and you aren't God's son. You did not return because your resurrection did not even take place but was only a pious wish. That is certain, because your body rotted in the tomb—that is, if it was put in a tomb at all and was not devoured by vultures and jackals."

A month after "Letter to Jesus" appeared, Lüdemann's fellow theologians at the University of Göttingen issued a statement urging his removal from their department. They found him "in flagrant conflict with the character and tasks of a theological faculty." In response, Göttingen's president, Horst Kern, recommended that Lüdemann be moved out of the theological faculty into the school's Institute for Special Research; that his chair be renamed "Professor of the History and Literature of Early Christianity"; and that he lose the assistant professorship tied to his chair and all rights to administer exams or supervise dissertations. Although he would still be allowed to teach, students would not receive credit for his courses. And if Lüdemann rejected his reassignment and insisted on remaining with the theology faculty, his research funds (more than fifteen thousand dollars per year) would be cut nearly in half. Outraged, Lüdemann took the case to court.

GERD LÜDEMANN

Since 1983, when his tenure began at Göttingen, Lüdemann has been adept at stirring up controversy. Although he follows a venerable scholarly tradition of trying to locate a credible, historical Jesus, Lüdemann has met with considerable resistance from his peers. In 1996, after speaking to *Der Spiegel* about abolishing the confessional element in theology, he lost the right to administer theological exams for those wishing to be ordained by the

"You weren't without sin and you aren't God's son. You did not return because your resurrection was only a pious wish," wrote Lüdemann.

PROFESSORDÄMMERUNG

ON APRIL 3, THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL LABOR Relations Board (NLRB) decided that New York University's graduate students could vote on whether to unionize. But while the Nibelungs consider organizing, the Titans are clashing.

On April 12, Andrew Ross, Richard Sennett, Alan Sokal, Todd Gitlin, Jeff Goodwin, and 135 other NYU professors signed an e-mail asking the university not to appeal the NLRB decision. The university appealed the next day. The day after that, Douglas Gale, Thomas Nagel, Ned Block, and 58 fellow NYU professors circulated an e-mail supporting the university's appeal. The faculty then flamed one another mightily, with each side accusing the other of opposing free speech. The NYU journalism department has posted their exchange at www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/journal/union/facdebate.htm. Below, a few highlights:

ANDREW ROSS: **[Our] petition called for the administration to respect the democratic right of our students to decide for themselves.... [I]n sidelining faculty opinion, it sought expressly to avoid the creation of an intimidating environment for our students. By that same token, I believe that an explicit anti-union petition can and will intimidate students. How could it not?**

TONY JUDT: **Dear Andrew, If you know of instances of intimidation (as distinct from "intimidation") of the students over this union issue, whether by the administration or by faculty, then I think we should all be told. I haven't seen the Pinkertons yet, and while students I speak to have varying views and some are just confused, no one claims to have been threatened, or even frightened. Perhaps you have privileged information?**

BETH SHINN: **A student...came to me to share her concerns about "retaliation" against students who advocate unionization. She wasn't concerned about the Pinkertons—more about lukewarm letters of recommendation when she is on the job market next year.**

ROSS: **Really, Tony, this is a matter of simple common sense. Surely you can imagine the impact on students when the entire faculty of their department declares its opposition to [the union]. Who would not be cowed?**

JUDT: **Andrew, I'm all for "common sense" as a criterion—and I'm pleasantly surprised to hear you invoke it.... [But] your reply consists of hearsay, hypothesis, and rumor. Should these trump freedom of speech?**

ROSS: **My final contribution, hopefully, to this thread is to offer a collegial reminder to my fellow chairs on this list about their potential legal exposure. At Yale, department chairs have been charged with unfair labor practices as a result of anti-union speech perceived to be intimidating. The consequence (neither rumor nor hypothesis) is that they have been put on trial. Some of us may view this kind of development as a curtailment of our own speech, but it is the law.**

The graduate students voted in late April, but as of this writing, their ballots remain sealed.

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Evangelical (Protestant) Church—an umbrella group of Protestant denominations. Since then, Lüdemann has written a number of books in which he sets out to provoke: *Heretics, The Unholy in Holy Scripture*, and *The Great Deception*. (His next book, *Jesus After 2,000 Years*, will be published by Prometheus this fall.) All of these works dwell on inconsistencies among biblical witnesses, power struggles between early Christian leaders, and the contrast between the person of Jesus and the figure of Christ. Lüdemann consistently aims to replace a theology based on faith with one based on historical knowledge. As he states flatly in *Heretics*, "The Bible is the word of human beings."

MARTIN LUTHER

Does Lüdemann's daring brand of theology warrant removal from his department? Since theology departments at state universities in Germany work under negotiated treaties with the Evangelical and Catholic churches, it just may.

The court ruled that Lüdemann had altered the basic elements of his contract by renouncing his faith in Christianity.

Under these treaties, the universities agree to perform educational functions for the Church—such as administering exams and conferring degrees—and the Church gets a say in the hiring process of professors. In its treaty, the Catholic Church retains an explicit right to fire Catholic theology professors. (In 1980, the theologian Hans Küng lost his university post at Tübingen after challenging the doctrine of papal infallibility.) Although the Evangelical Church does not enjoy this right, it can make recommendations to the university regarding such matters. Indeed, in January of this year, a paper issued by the university made it clear that the Evangelical Church was demanding Lüdemann's dismissal.

And for Lüdemann, this was bad news. In a series of preliminary hearings last fall, the courts came down against him, stating that if the Church recommended his dismissal, the university could comply without violating his rights as a civil servant. It is, the court continued, "an affair of the Church alone—not of the religiously

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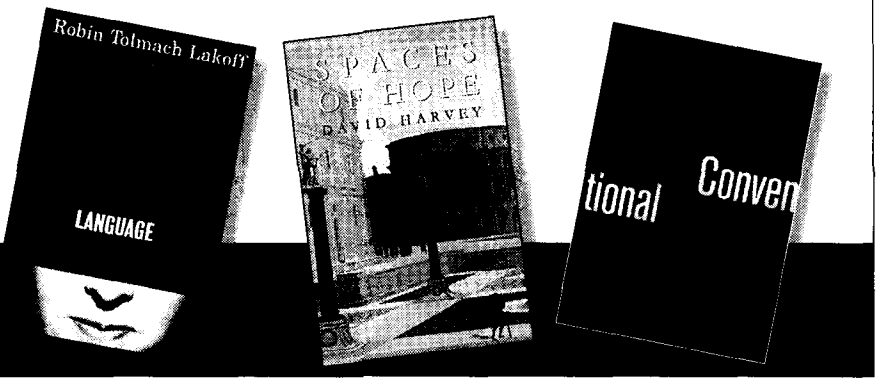

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and philosophically neutral institutions of the state of Lower Saxony—to judge [whether Lüdemann] is authorized to represent the theology of this confession." Lüdemann appealed, but in February Lower Saxony's higher regional court rebuffed him. In effect, the court ruled that Lüdemann had altered the basic elements of his contract by renouncing his faith in Christianity.

What happens next? Lüdemann says that he must wait for the courts to make their final rulings, which could take up to four years. But because the courts have already ruled against him in preliminary hearings, he concedes, "the cards don't look so good."

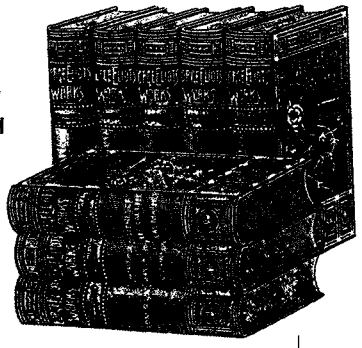
Nonetheless, Lüdemann's intention to take his case before the German equivalent of the Supreme Court may stir up a national debate. As Gerhard Besier, a professor of church history at the University of Heidelberg, wrote in the German newspaper *Die Welt*, "The case of Lüdemann could become the case of theology," with the intimate partnership of church and state forced to undergo an uncomfortable reexamination.

Meanwhile, Americans may be coming to the rescue. At the end of March, *Die Welt* published an open letter of protest by the Jesus Seminar, a group of mostly American fellows (Lüdemann is among them) dedicated to "renewing the quest for the historical Jesus." "The task of western culture," wrote the fellows, "is to critically engage our Christian past. To exclude this challenge completely from the theological curriculum would make a farce of the discipline."

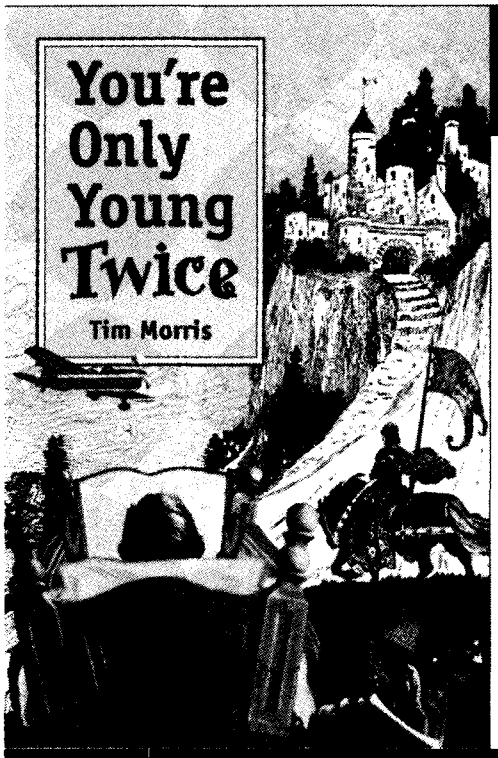
ANDREW PIPER

WANTED:
A FEW GOOD BOOKS

THIS OCTOBER, *LINGUA FRANCA* WILL CELEBRATE ITS TENTH anniversary with a retrospective look at academia in the 1990s. From Paglia to Pinker, Greenblatt to GESO, we aim to cover it all. To that end, we invite you to tell us about the heartbreaking works of staggering academic genius that got you through the decade.



What scholarly books were most important to you? Which made you think in new and worthwhile ways? Please send your choices—you may pick up to three titles—via e-mail (webedit@linguafranca.com), the Web(www.linguafranca.com/bestbooks), or regular mail (Jason Sholl/*Lingua Franca*/135 Madison Ave., 4th floor/New York, NY 10016). All books must have first appeared between 1990 and 1999. You may also submit a few sentences explaining why you think any given book on your list belongs among the decade's best. The results will appear in *LF*'s tenth anniversary issue.



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Breakthrough Books

TECHNOLOGY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

WE ASKED SIX SCHOLARS AND WRITERS TO RECOMMEND THE BEST RECENT BOOKS ON DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND HIGHER EDUCATION.

Hank Bromley, assistant professor of education at the State University of New York at Buffalo and co-editor of *Education/Technology/Power: Educational Computing As a Social Practice* (SUNY, 1998).

"Public discussions of education and technology tend to treat policy issues in both areas as a simple problem of efficiency—a question of how best to attain presumably consensual goals. There is far too little work addressing whose interests are served by wiring our schools and colleges. Among the welcome exceptions are **David F. Noble**'s ongoing **'Digital Diploma Mills'** essays (available online at www.communication.ucsd.edu/dl/) and **Marita Moll**'s edited collection ***Tech High: Globalization and the Future of Canadian Education*** (Fernwood, 1997). For twenty-five years, Noble has chronicled pivotal moments in the history of technology, depicting technology as 'hardened history, frozen fragments of human and social endeavor.' 'Digital Diploma Mills' analyzes the motives for putting universities online and traces the incursion of market forces into the educational realm, as well as the resulting attempt to commodify core teaching functions. Moll's book similarly addresses the broader context of educational technologization, emphasizing economic globalization, the nature of educational labor, and the ongoing impact of racial and sexual inequality."

Ann Okerson, associate university librarian at Yale University and editor of *Visions and Opportunities in Electronic Publishing* (Association of Research Libraries, 1993).

"With the advent of the microcomputer and the Internet, information moves among people more rapidly than ever. The ease of copying undermines old rules and practices that were designed to turn words into commodities and intellect into property. Universities are caught between the pressures of old and new—the need to foster the dissemination of information and the need to control it. Understanding these pressures is central to ***The Digital Dilemma*** (National Academy Press, 2000). Commissioned by the National Science Foundation and carried out by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Science, the book comes with suitably blue-ribbon credentials. At its core lie the complexities and ironies of intellectual property law, which puts forward restraint and control as the best means of facilitating dissemination and freedom. Outlining issues with clarity and judiciousness, the book is without polemic or rancor. The volume is an excellent handbook for faculty, librarians, and administrators seeking to understand the choices they will face as universities produce and consume new kinds of intellectual property in a new kind of information economy."

Patrick Clinton, executive editor of *University Business*.

"According to the popular press, the only thing inhibiting the growth of computer-mediated education is a handful of technical problems—and the alleged Luddite tendencies of the faculty. But there are bigger, subtler problems: How does technology fit into institutional missions; how is it to be funded; what business models are appropriate for developing and marketing new courses; and how are faculty to be brought on board? For insight into these issues, I like **Anthony W. Bates**'s ***Managing Technological Change: Strategies for College and University Leaders*** (Jossey-Bass, 1999). Bates has a solid grasp on how successful institutions have established new programs, and he is refreshingly nondoctrinaire. He also manages to talk about education and money without confusing them.

"**Paul Duguid** and **John Seely Brown**'s ***The Social Life of Information*** (Harvard Business, 2000) is not really a book about education, though it has a fine, provocative chapter on universities. Rather, it examines a wide array of fields, many of them related to business and technology, to uncover areas where learning and competence are based on something other than the exchange of information. The results aren't always easy to apply, but they illuminate the extent to which classroom learning can be provided electronically, and they truly help to combat what Duguid and Brown call 'Technological Tunnel Vision.'"

Richard E. Miller, associate professor of English at Rutgers University and author of *As If Learning Mattered:*

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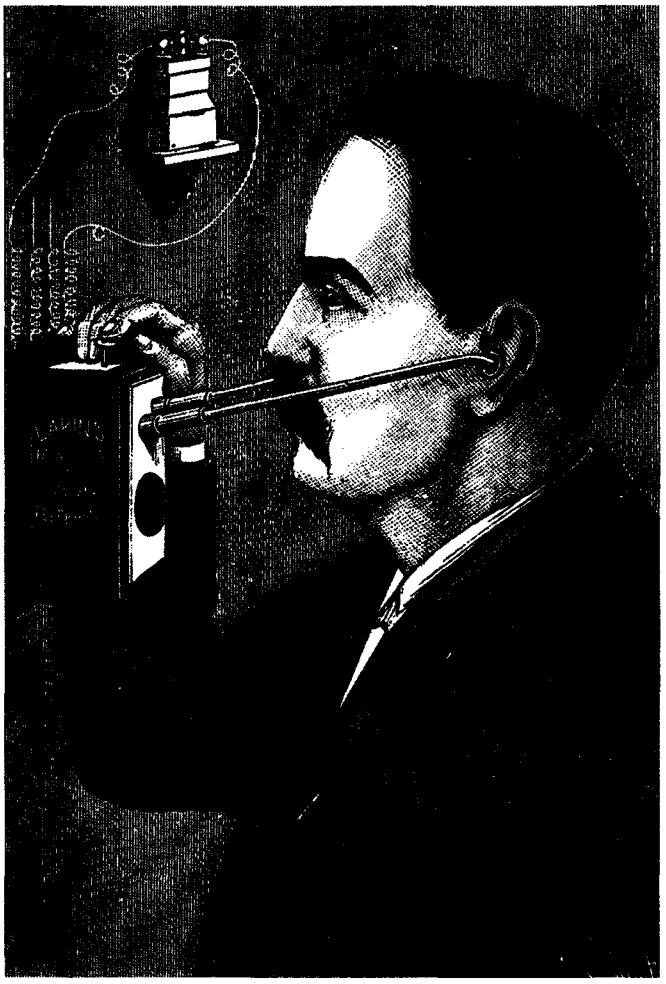
Reforming Higher Education (Cornell, 1998).

"Nothing is generating more anxiety and rage in the academy today than the rise of instructional technology. Given all the money that's being thrown into the machines, the wiring, and the dorm rooms, as well as all the attendant hype about the cost benefits of fully automated instruction, most of us in higher education have fallen into 'techno-despair,' a state of mind characterized by a strong sense that the venerable profession of teaching is doomed. Fortunately for those interested in a more nuanced assessment of how best to respond to the revolution in the funding and delivery of higher education, **Gail E. Hawisher** and **Cynthia L. Selfe**, longtime leaders in the use of computers in writing instruction, have put together ***Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies*** (Utah State, 1999). This edited collection, which includes essays by some of the most thoughtful teachers and scholars working in composition today, shows how technology has changed, and is changing, the meaning of literacy, teaching, ethics, and the self. The result is a usefully discordant and self-reflexive volume, accessible to those just entering the discussion and rewarding to those more experienced readers looking for guidance about how to make sense of this latest evolution in the form and function of higher education."

James J. O'Donnell, professor of classical studies and vice provost for information systems and computing at the University of Pennsylvania and author of *Avatars of the Word: From Papyrus to Cyberspace* (Harvard, 1998).

"**Bill Readings**, a brilliant and provocative comparatist at the University of Montreal, died much too young, in a plane crash a few years ago. His book ***The University in Ruins*** (Harvard, 1997) analyzes the university's inner politics and its relationship to its historic wider social purpose. The book renders forever questionable the language of 'excellence' in academic self-congratulation and brings intellectual passion and seriousness to debates about university futures. **Hal R. Varian** and **Carl Shapiro**, on the other hand, barely mention universities in their handbook to survival and prosperity in the network economy, ***Information Rules*** (Harvard Business, 1998). The slight is a sign of the great risk universities face: They may well become irrelevant, regardless of how much or how little we use the language of 'excellence.' We must learn again to link academic discourse with academic policy or we will become only one more sector of the service economy, awaiting restructuring and downsizing."

Karin M. Wiburg, associate professor and coordinator of learning technologies at New Mexico State University and co-author of *Teaching With Technology* (Harcourt Brace, 1997).



"In ***Electronic Collaborators: Learner-Centered Technologies for Literacy, Apprenticeship, and Discourse*** (Erlbaum, 1998), **Curtis Jay Bonk** and **Kira S. King** examine how digital technologies enable teachers to implement new pedagogical theories about collaboration. The writers study the effect on intellectual development of tools that move learning from synchronous to asynchronous environments. If the book has a weakness, it lies in its lack of a critical cultural perspective and its limited view of literacy as only print-based. **Richard N. Katz**'s ***Dancing With the Devil*** (Jossey-Bass, 1999) suggests that one can no longer ignore the rapidly growing competition from for-profit, technology-based universities and colleges. The book also examines some of the emerging problems in higher education that technology might be able to address. These problems include a shift from just-in-case education ('study this in case you need to know it some day') to just-in-time education and the increased demand on higher education institutions to provide services, often at a distance, to the larger society. Katz provides a useful glimpse of the dangers and promise of technology in higher education."

JOHN PALATTELLA

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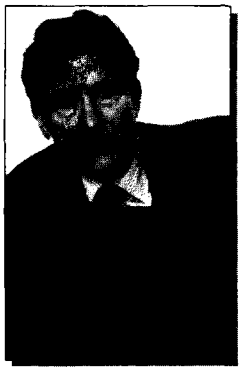

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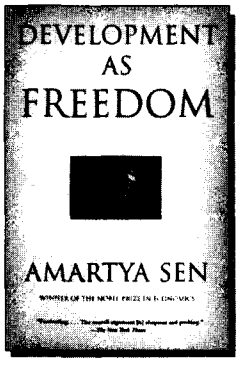

Development as Freedom

by Amartya Sen

1998 Nobel Laureate in Economic Science

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—Kenneth J. Arrow, Nobel Laureate and Emeritus Professor of Economics, Stanford University

Drawing on moral and political philosophy and technical economic analysis, *Development as Freedom* vividly shows how Sen, in the words of the Nobel committee, has both "restored an ethical dimension to the discussion of economic problems" and "opened up new fields of study for subsequent generations of researchers."

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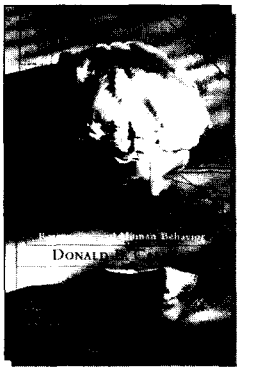

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Rationality and Human Behavior

by Donald B. Calne

"Calne is in league with Steven Pinker, Antonio Damasio, and E. O. Wilson. . . . *Within Reason* provides compelling new insights into the workings of the human brain."

—Roger N. Rosenberg, M.D., Chief Editor, *Archives of Neurology*

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THE FRENCH REVOLUTION WILL BE WEBCAST

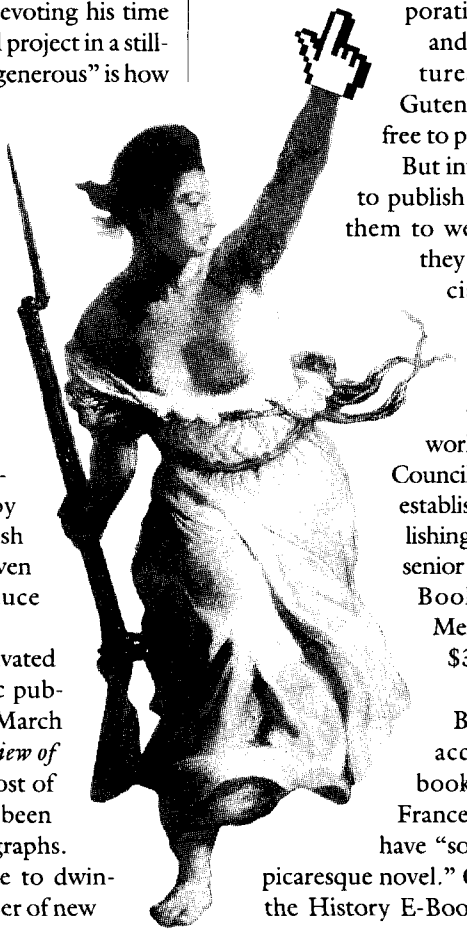
ON MARCH 14, HORROR NOVELIST STEPHEN King jump-started electronic trade-book publishing. He released a sixty-six-page novella on the World Wide Web, and twenty-four hours later almost half a million fans had downloaded it. What King did for horror, Princeton University history professor Robert Darnton now hopes to do for the academic monograph.

Darnton, a former reporter for the *New York Times,* is one of the most respected scholars of revolutionary France and the author of such popular works as *The Great Cat Massacre* and *The Kiss of Lamourette.* Why is he devoting his time and energy to an unconventional project in a still-suntested medium? "Extremely generous" is how Darnton's agent, Lynn Nesbit, describes his decision to go electronic. "It is terrifying, really," Darnton admits. "I'm sixty-one years old, and I worry about getting lost in cyberspace and spending the rest of my life on this."

But Darnton has been drinking the Kool-Aid, as they say in the new-media business. He has become a true believer in the Internet's potential to transform academic publishing—by helping university presses publish more monographs and maybe even by enabling scholars to produce better history.

Darnton says he was first motivated by the dismal state of academic publishing, which he surveyed in a March 1999 issue of the *New York Review of Books.* Squeezed by the rising cost of science journals, libraries have been buying fewer academic monographs. In the early 1990s, in response to dwindling library demand, the number of new titles began to decline. When he became president of the American Historical Association in 1999, Darnton decided to make the "monograph crisis" his cause.

The result was Gutenberg-e, a project that sponsors the electronic publication of exemplary dissertations. Starting in 2000 and funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Gutenberg-e will annually award six young scholars twenty-thousand-dollar postdoctoral grants to publish their dissertations in electronic form through Columbia University Press, incorporating video clips, sound, and other new-media features. (After three years, Gutenberg-e winners will be free to publish in paper as well.) But inviting younger scholars to publish on-line may be asking them to weaken their resumés—they risk the stigma of association with the Web's ever-accumulating self-published trash heap.



ART RESOURCE, NY

To bring prestige to the enterprise, Darnton worked with the American Council of Learned Societies to establish a second on-line publishing program, this time for senior scholars: the History E-Book Project, which the Mellon foundation granted $3 million in June 1999.

The first History E-Book will be Darnton's account of an itinerant bookseller's travels across France, which he hopes will have "some of the interest of a picaresque novel." Over the next five years, the History E-Book Project will buy the

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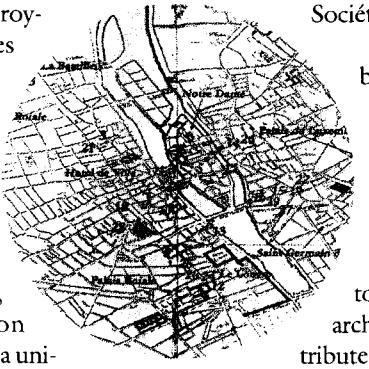
digital rights to about eighty-five new on-line monographs by established scholars, paying the seven participating university presses ten to fifteen thousand dollars per monograph. Some will be fat with elaborate new-media accoutrements, others will be plain text with hyperlinks, and most will be somewhere in the middle. The project will also digitize about five hundred influential backlist monographs. The titles, old and new, will be available at www.historyebook.org. Like the commercial venture netLibrary, the History E-Book Project will charge universities and libraries for on-line access to its books. The royalties earned will go to the presses and the authors.

Darnton's electronic essay featured two-century-old gossip about anti-sodomy raids and the queen's child.

Will e-books swell the volume of monograph publishing? Some doubt whether they can, others whether they should. "It seems unlikely that electronic books are going to be any cheaper to publish," says Walter Lippincott, editorial director of Princeton University Press. "The big cost for a university press is the gatekeeper function. It is not so much the copyediting and the printing and the binding in nice cloth. It is deciding which are the very best scholarly monographs to publish. And I don't see the demand increasing just because they are in electronic form. The fact is there is a limited demand for monographs." Harvard University Press editor Lindsay Waters suggests that Darnton may be tackling the wrong end of the bull. "I'm afraid it will all turn out to be a big waste of money," says Waters. "The notion of just letting more stuff flow out, when we are already inundated with stuff, is just making the world worse."

But Darnton is undaunted: He hopes the Internet will yield not only more monographs but better ones, with more of the texture of the past. He tested some of the medium's possibilities when he put his presidential address to the American Historical Association, "An Early Information Society," on-line. The electronic address features satiric eighteenth-century songs performed by cabaret singer Hélène Delavault, maps of Paris that detail the locations of cafés, and samples of conversation heard in the cafés by the king's spies. (Check out www.indiana.edu/~ahr/darnton/ for the two-century-old gossip about anti-sodomy raids and the gender of the queen's next child.)

Darnton's on-line monograph will be even more ambitious. Tentatively titled "A Literary Tour de France: An Electronic Book About Books in the Age of Enlightenment," the essay will be accompanied by its source—a traveling salesman's 1778 diary, full of such details as how much he paid to have his horse shoed and bled. Darnton has in mind not so much an on-line scholarly edition as an on-line "archaeological dig." Along the stops of the book peddler's journey, Darnton hopes to place a series of essays on bookstores, smugglers, paper suppliers, and press workers, all hyperlinked to each other and to original source material. Eventually he hopes to post on-line some eighteen hundred letters and other documents from the period, drawn from the archive of an eighteenth-century Swiss-French publisher, the Société Typographique de Neuchatel.



That archive happens to be the basis of Darnton's own scholarly career. He first heard of it in 1963, and has been mining it ever since. "I must have published a hundred articles based on that archive by now, and some books," he says. Darnton hopes to develop an on-line site for the archive where other scholars can contribute their own interpretations of the documents and criticize his work and each other's. "I am imagining a series of essays on every aspect of the world of books, and I hope I can entice collaborators to explore the site further," Darnton explains. He himself would edit the site, and he imagines a committee of scholars would carry on after he retires.

It sounds like the stuff of scholarly fantasy—the reader welcomed into the archive, the book transformed into a community that continues to research and write itself. And it's a long way from the humdrum matter of an academic monograph shortage. "I am participating in the subject I am studying," Darnton says. "If this book about books becomes a part of book history, it is going to get an even more severe reading by future historians. It raises the stakes."

DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

NIGHT OF THE LIVING PHILOLOGIST

FORBIDDEN PLANET, THE ICONIC 1956 SPACE opera, serves up a feast for film scholars: It invokes nuclear anxieties, leans heavily on Shakespeare's *Tempest*, and features the most over-the-top Freudian plot in cinema history. The movie also influenced decades of sci-fi films with its natty uniforms and retro-future gadgetry. But the winter 2000 issue of *Raritan* explores a latent,

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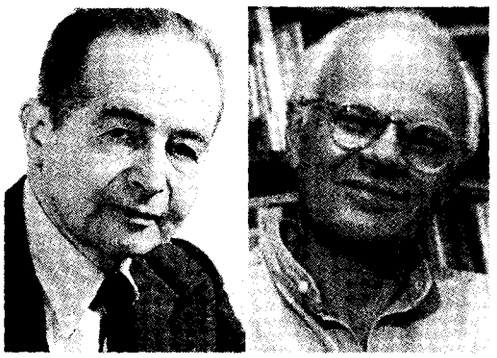
STILLS FROM *FORBIDDEN PLANET*

previously untapped strain of meaning in the film. According to Seth Lerer, chairman of the comparative literature department at Stanford, the movie allegorizes the influence of European émigrés on American humanities departments in the postwar years.

For those who missed the film's last showing on *Mystery Science Theater 2000*, a quick recap: A young Leslie Nielsen, in the emphatically pre-ironic phase of his career, stars as J.J. Adams, the square-jawed leader of a mission to the planet Altair IV in search of survivors from an earlier, doomed voyage. The only survivor is Morbius, an inscrutable, black-clad figure who lives with his almost comically sexy daughter and Robby the Robot. Morbius (played by Walter Pidgeon) had been the previous voyage's "mission philologist." The cultured man has fashioned a comfortable, glass-paneled homestead for himself. There he whiles away his time in his study, scrutinizing the writings of the Krell, an "all-but-divine race" that once ruled Altair IV but died out two thousand centuries ago. Unfortunately, this turns out to be a perilous pastime: The Krell's texts help to turn Morbius's savage id loose.

Does Lerer, a specialist in Old and Middle English, read Robby the Robot as a cleverly disguised Paul de Man? Not exactly. But according to Lerer, Morbius's "visage, his bearing, his pursuits, and his demise all cluster around a set of social and historical events that were reshaping literary and linguistic study in the postwar period." After all, when *Forbidden Planet* was released, the likes of Erich Auerbach, Werner Jaeger, and Leo Spitzer, all émigrés from Nazi Europe, were transforming literary study in the United States. Indeed, the film "is a legend of the ambiguities of learning, ambiguities that extend to the émigré himself. Exile or collaborator? asked the American academy of him and his ilk."

As interpreter and mediator of a lost civilization of unimaginable wisdom, Morbius occupies the same role as those, on Earth, who embody the classical and high European tradition. J.J. Adams and his crew are "all openness and brilliant color," cut from a single space-age cloth and interchangeably American. On the other hand, Morbius, with his dark clothes, his "Mephistophelian goatee and widow's peak," has a decidedly exotic, Hollywood-European mien. The contrast puts Lerer in mind of a description of Spitzer by one of his students at Johns Hopkins in the 1950s, the Dante scholar John Freccero: "In those days of crew cuts and white bucks, the figure of the continental virtuoso challenged every canon of male decorum."



Was a 1950s sci-fi flick really an allegory about émigré literature scholars?

ERICH AUERBACH (LEFT)
LEO SPITZER (RIGHT)

Come to think of it, the forbidden planet, with its hot sun, desert vegetation, and arroyos, looks a lot like Southern California. Morbius's house, moreover, could pass for one of the Mies van der Rohe knockoffs that hit Southern California in the 1950s like so much space debris. "I have col-

TOP: PHOTOFEST (2); STERLING MEMORIAL LIBRARY; JOSEPH MEHLING/DARTMOUTH COLLEGE ARCHIVES

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leagues who live in houses like that," Lerer says. The kind of place, in other words, that Arnold Schoenberg or Thomas Mann might have called home during their California sojourns.

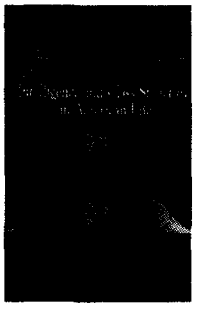
The essay is to be the final chapter in a book Lerer is writing on the depiction of intellectuals in literature and pop culture from the Renaissance to the present. His interviewer asks, gently, whether in boldly going where no film critic has gone before, Lerer might be pushing a campy piece of sci-fi too far.

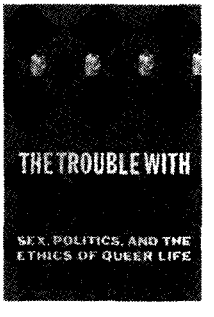
"Have you read much pop-culture criticism?" Lerer responds. "Certainly, compared with what I've read in pop-culture criticism, this is under-reading."

CHRISTOPHER SHEA

WHO LOST THE FREE PRESS?

THESE DAYS, READERS FAMILIAR WITH THE Free Press may be scratching their heads in bewilderment. The imprint, which the *New York Times Magazine* once called the neoconservative "establishment's most important house," is best known for publishing such right-wing best-sellers as *The Bell Curve* and *Illiberal Education*. But in the last year, the publisher has come out with a host of books more likely to arouse conservatives' ire than admiration. Among them are *The Trouble With Normal*, a polemic against the mainstreaming of gay life by queer theorist Michael Warner; *Scapegoat*, a book on Israel by radical feminist Andrea Dworkin; and *I May Not Get There With You*, a biographical essay on Martin Luther King Jr. by self-described "homeboy with a Ph.D." Michael Eric Dyson.





Charles Murray, meet queer theory.

For some conservatives, the Free Press's leftward shift is a depressing sign of the times. "Most conservatives feel a little besieged; there are very few outlets out there anymore," laments Roger Kimball, a leading neoconservative critic and managing editor at the *New Criterion*. (Several of Kimball's own books have been published by Ivan R. Dee, an independent Chicago-based press with a right-of-center bent.) On the other hand, Free Press favorite Dinesh D'Souza maintains that books like Dyson's are "attractive, if they open doors to wider readership."

In fact, the new titles are no departure from the Free Press's historic mission: to bridge the gap between the academy and the reading public. Founded in 1947 by Jeremiah Kaplan and Charles Leibman, both American Civil Liberties Union activists (as a student, Kaplan was expelled from City College of New York for his leftist ties), the Free Press began as a publisher of European social science. The press's first acquisitions included classics such as Emile Durkheim's *Division of Labor* and Max Weber's *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*. It was not until the accession of Erwin Glikes to the editorship in 1983 that the house acquired a reputation for maverick conservatism.

Glikes, who was a professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia in the 1960s and an editor at Basic Books in the 1970s, pioneered the neoconservative publishing revolution by acquiring Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* during a stint at Simon and Schuster. Although Glikes became famous for the conservative titles he added to the Free Press list, he was, in the eyes of many, better described as a Cold War liberal, and he always kept the house ideologically diverse. In fact, he signed up Lani Guinier and Andrea Dworkin as well as Robert Bork, George F. Will, and Francis Fukuyama.

After Simon and Schuster bought the Free Press in 1994, Glikes departed to start up his own imprint at Penguin Books. (He died of a heart attack soon after.) His successor, Adam Bellow (son of Saul), continued to embrace books that advanced conservative ideas, among them *The End of Racism*, D'Souza's follow-up to *Illiberal Education*. Bellow saw the press sell more than 400,000 copies of *The Bell Curve*, a book Glikes had acquired before his departure. But other titles fared poorly, most notoriously David Brock's *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham*, which received a large advance and sold terribly.

Shortly after Bellow's departure in 1998, the Free Press made a significant shift. Liz Maguire, a veteran of academic publishing, became editor in chief, and the press seemingly turned full circle. "I am not conservative at all," Maguire says. Before arriving at the Free Press, she had worked at Oxford University Press, publishing academic stars like Dyson, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Jane Tompkins. "When I got to the Free Press," she explains, "I said to the publisher, I just don't want to see another list filled with these angry guys moaning about how the world is going to hell in a handbasket." Nonetheless, Maguire points out the press is still publishing conservative writers such as Richard Brookhiser and William Bennett.

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Describing her plans, she gladly invokes the example of Glikes, whose ability to play both sides of the ideological fence she particularly admires.

Of course, Brookhiser and Bennett are stalwarts of the conservative movement, not new voices. When asked if she would publish a book like *The Bell Curve,* she demurs: "It's fair to say that I'm not out there beating the bushes for the next great conservative thinker." Instead, she enthusiastically points to her "two Michaels" (Warner and Dyson) and the forthcoming publication of Cornel West and Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s *The African-American Century: How Black America Has Shaped Everyone's America.* The latter, she says gleefully, "is probably going to bring down the roof over my head from some quarters. But I have to publish what I love."

A publisher also has to keep up with changes in the market. Many in the industry point to the decline in sales of conservative social criticism. When today's best-seller lists do feature conservative titles, they tend to be anti-Clinton screeds by an Ann Coulter or an R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., not weightier tomes by the likes of a Francis Fukuyama, who himself recently left the Free Press to sign with Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Reflecting on the changed landscape, Bellow notes, "The steam has gone out of the conservative movement." Maguire adds: "If I don't see the readership there, I won't publish the book."

But if conservatives have indeed lost the Free Press, then the rise of Encounter Books might give them reason to hope their ideas have found a new home. Founded by ex-*Ramparts* editor and New Left radical turned New Right provocateur Peter Collier (and given a generous initial subsidy by the conservative Bradley Foundation), the fledgling imprint has started with a modest list, including a book by anti-affirmative-action activist Ward Connerly as well as Roger Kimball's polemical reckoning with the culture of the 1960s, *The Long March.* For his part, Collier does not want to be pigeonholed as merely a conservative publisher. "I've always had a flexible definition of what this enterprise is about," he says. "If people expect a kind of 'Con-intern' they're going to be disappointed." But Collier is also mindful of the Free Press's apparent defection from the movement. Among his offerings are Fred Siegel's attack on liberal urban policy, *The Future Once Happened Here,* and Keith Windschuttle's broadside against poststructuralist historiography, *The Killing of History.* As it happens, both titles were published by the Free Press before they were snapped up by Collier for paperback reprint.

MATTHEW PRICE

THE PURPLE PROSE OF CAIRO

AS A GRADUATE STUDENT IN EGYPTOLOGY AT the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute in the early 1950s, Barbara Mertz overheard gossip about herself of a sort Hatshepsut never had to put up with. "At least we don't have to worry about finding a job for her," one of her professors said to another. "She'll get married."

In fact, Mertz did marry (and divorce), and she has never held an academic position. But her writing has affected Egyptology in ways her advisers never could have imagined. Under the pen names Barbara Michaels and Elizabeth Peters,

Alternative careers in Egyptology: mystery-novel bestsellerdom.

BARBARA MERTZ AND HER CAT, RAMSES

COURTESY AVON BOOKS

she has written nearly sixty thrillers and mystery novels, of which more than a dozen put Egyptology and Egyptologists front and center.

Her most popular books, written as Elizabeth Peters, are comic mystery novels featuring Victorian Egyptologist and feminist Amelia Peabody. Amelia, together with her high-minded and irascible archaeologist husband, Radcliffe Emerson, and their "catastrophically precocious" son (nicknamed Ramses), appears in twelve witty homages to the Victorian thriller, in which they fight master criminals, discover ancient lost civilizations, and generally protect the innocent. In May, William Morrow published the latest installment, *He Shall Thunder in the Sky,* which brings the family up to 1915 and into World War I. It promptly hit the *New York Times* best-seller list.

The books provide a painless primer on Egyptology's history. Mertz says that Radcliffe Emerson is "inspired by" Flinders Petrie, an eccen-

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"Something is going to turn up," Amelia reassures the future discoverer of King Tut.

tric amateur whose methodological exactitude helped shape the field. Other early Egyptologists have cameos: Wallis Budge, whose scholarship is largely scorned today, serves as the hapless dupe of several evil schemes; Howard Carter, the future discoverer of Tutankhamen's tomb, appears as an Emerson family friend. At one particularly low point, Amelia reassures Carter, "Take my word for it. Something is going to turn up!"

"What I find interesting," says Peter Dorman, an assistant professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, "is that she goes to enormous lengths to get the Egyptological facts right." The daily work of a turn-of-the-century field archaeologist provides atmosphere and plot material. Dennis Forbes, editor of the general-audience Egyptology quarterly *KMT*, says, "I think that any Egyptologist who reads fiction reads [the Amelia novels] and anticipates the next one coming out."

Forbes also lauds two surveys of ancient Egyptian history and culture that Mertz wrote when her first mysteries couldn't find a publisher—two of only three books she has published under her own name. "Most Egyptologists under forty-five admit to having read the nonfiction books when they were teens," says Forbes. Thirty years on, *Temples, Tombs, and Hieroglyphs: A Popular History of Ancient Egypt* and *Red Land, Black Land: Daily Life in Ancient Egypt* are still in print; Mertz is currently revising both to take more recent scholarship into account.

Mertz still gets letters from readers of her nonfiction and fiction who want to become Egyptologists. "I always make suggestions," she says. "Get a good general education, focusing on history and languages.... But if I were honest, I would advise them to forget about Egyptology as a career. Jobs are hard to find and competition is fierce." Of course, Mertz's own career suggests that not every Egyptologist need make her mark in the classroom: She serves on the editorial advisory board of *KMT* side by side with professional archaeologists and is an active supporter of the Oriental Institute's Epigraphic Survey.

He Shall Thunder in the Sky ends happily, tying up plot strands that have stretched across multiple books in the series. Forbes hopes the series will continue at least until the storyline reaches 1922, the date of Egypt's independence and Carter's Tutankhamen find. "But by the 1920s, Amelia and Emerson might be too old," Forbes muses. "They'd be in their seventies. But then again, so is Barbara, and she hasn't slowed down a bit."

MICHELE TEPPER

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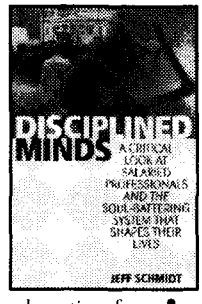

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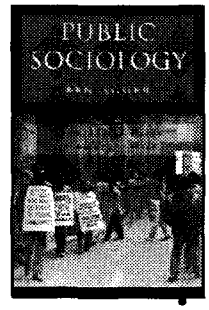

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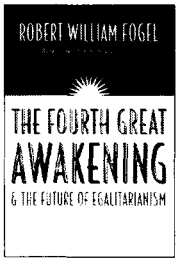

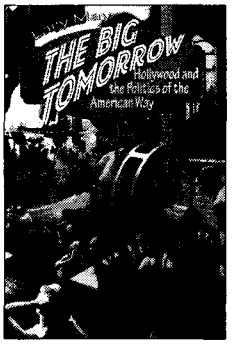

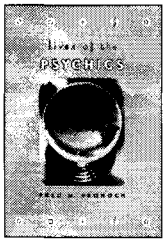

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SHATTERED

A YOUNG ACADEMIC CLASHES WITH A SENIOR COLLEAGUE AND HER WORLD FALLS TO PIECES

BY JOHANNA BERKMAN

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IN JANUARY 1999, A CURIOUS SERIES OF LAWYER'S LETTERS BEGAN circulating through Vanderbilt University. In a style that was one part Moses Herzog, two parts Johnnie Cochran, the author alleged that his client, a Swiss-born assistant professor, had been hounded, humiliated, and discriminated against by her fellow French department members. Aline Baehler, Jeffrey Duban asserted, was the victim of a string of "tawdry deceits," and her two-and-a-half-year Vanderbilt stint had been marred by sexual harassment, defamation, and national-origin discrimination. What's more, Duban informed the university that Baehler had empirical proof: She had surreptitiously tape-recorded telephone conversations with some of her colleagues.

The letters sent shock waves through a department already deep in disarray. "Let me show you how paranoid things are," offers Larry Crist, a retired professor of French medieval studies, when I arrive at his cream-colored home on the crest of a wooded hill outside Nashville. "Do you have a card? Because for all I know you could be sent by Aline's lawyer." Crist is one of the people Baehler taped, and the first thing he wants to discuss is his newest area of expertise: Tennessee's laws on the use of tapes secretly recorded by one party to a conversation (they're legal, and admissible as evidence). Virginia Scott, the new department chair, who presides over her colleagues from a turretlike office on the fringes of the Vanderbilt campus, is relaxed and friendly—until I remove a tape recorder from my briefcase. "I really would hate that," she says, her face tightening, when I ask if I may turn it on. "I chose academia because I was not going to be involved with the Linda Tripps of the world."

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More corporate than collegiate, Vanderbilt's campus seems an unlikely setting for such intrigue. Although it is bordered by busy roads and a commercial strip that seems to include one outpost of every fast-food chain in America, there is absolutely no litter and little noise. Small steel ID tags beside each of the hundreds of trees give the grounds the staged look of an arboretum, which it was designated in 1988. Student posters are neither tacked to bulletin boards nor taped to the walls but rather neatly fastened by fishing line to the trunks of the chestnuts and pines. From the inside, Kirkland Hall, the college's main administrative building, could easily be mistaken for the headquarters of a lucrative private company: There is the hush that comes from too much central air-conditioning, the charming receptionist impeccably dressed in a cashmere twinset, and the requisite long hallway lined with portraits of the family of the up-by-the-bootstraps genius who started it all, in this case, railroad baron Cornelius Vanderbilt.

It seems fitting that the achievement that recently brought Vanderbilt into the national spotlight was a financial one: luring Gordon Gee, who had been president of Brown University for just two years, to the post of chancellor with an investment-banker-like package worth nearly $1 million a year. The week I visited campus, the big issue was how to develop a support network for the "VandyGirl," the stereotypical undergraduate woman, whom a letter in the student newspaper, *The Vanderbilt Hustler*, defined as having a "goal of perfection (regarding image, thinness, the best clothes, etc.)." The VandyGirl, I learned, likes to eat salads and jog, favors Tiffany heart bracelets and "slimming black pants." She's also partial to BMWs and SUVs.

It is easy to imagine how Aline Baehler might have had difficulty acclimating to such a milieu. At forty, Baehler has the spare European good looks of a younger, rumpled version of *Vogue* editor Anna Wintour (sans the six-figure clothing budget). She wears little makeup, no jewelry, and lots of black, and rolls her own cigarettes with amazing dexterity. But even before she moved into her new Nashville home—a loft apartment above a German restaurant downtown—her troubles had begun. While Baehler knew that she was one of the first people hired to teach feminism and literary theory in the Department of French and Italian, she did not know that her appointment was remarkable for another reason. She was the first professor hired without the consent of the department's erstwhile leading light—the world's foremost Baudelaire scholar, septuagenarian Claude Pichois.

THE DAUGHTER of a watchmaking teacher and his accountant wife, Baehler was raised in Geneva. As an undergraduate at university there in the early 1980s, she majored in twentieth-century French literature and philosophy, focusing on the work of Claude Simon, a leader of the experimental school of fiction writing known as the *nouveau roman*. After completing her degree, Baehler went to the University of Paris VII to study Lacanian analysis under the direction of Julia Kristeva. In 1988, she headed for New York University, the center for the study of the *nouveau roman*.

At NYU, Baehler thrived. Tom Bishop, who has been chairman of the NYU French department for thirty years, remembers her as "one of the very, very brightest students" the department had ever had. After studying writers like Alain Robbe-Grillet and Nathalie Sarraute, Baehler wrote her dissertation on the concept of the literary pilgrimage, in which a writer transforms himself from, as Harold Bloom might say, an ephebe into a strong poet by following in the literal and metaphoric footsteps of the masters. (Baehler considered, for example, Violette Leduc's retracing of Simone de Beauvoir's travels.) But even for outstanding students like Baehler, the mid-1990s humanities job market was tough, and it wasn't until the spring of 1996, after three years of searching, that she received an attractive proposal: $38,500 a year and a shot at tenure in a department that billed itself as mid-upper level. Although she was reluctant to leave the city she loved, Baehler packed up her things, got into her silver Chrysler, and drove south to Tennessee.

TWENTY-SIX years earlier and equally unexpectedly, Claude Pichois also struck a path to Nashville. Then a professor at the Sorbonne, Pichois had made his reputation by editing the complete works of Charles Baudelaire, as well as those of Gérard de Nerval and Colette, for the Pléiade Library. Of all his contributions to scholarship, the Baudelaire Pléiade is probably his greatest. "There is no comparable edition," says Marc Froment-Meurice, a Vanderbilt colleague. "It's complete. You have a guarantee that the pieces in this edition are absolutely double-checked. This is something not very easy to do with Baudelaire because he was constantly rewriting." In 1968, Vanderbilt offered to create a new Baudelaire Center to house the world's most extensive private Baudelaire collection, which was the property of W.T. Bandy, a Vanderbilt alumnus and professor of nineteenth-century French literature at the University of Wisconsin. After Bandy accepted, Pichois followed, taking a position concurrent with his post at the Sorbonne.

Like Baudelaire, whose photograph he kept on the desk in his office in Furman Hall, Pichois is reed-thin with an intense gaze. A ferocious chain-smoker, he dressed like Baudelaire too, sporting natty three-piece suits, even in the southern heat. In Vanderbilt's French department, the Parisian professor quickly acquired a mythic status that endures today. "He is the god of French literature in France!" graduate student Richard Espenant exults over a cup of coffee at the campus branch of Alpine Bagel. "You mention the word 'plague,'" says Espenant, "he will tell you all the plagues of the nineteenth century. You mention anything, he will tell you all about it." Even his colleagues describe him as a genius. "A person like that," says Larry Crist, "you want to give them free rein and let them do their work."

On Vanderbilt's campus, Pichois was regarded as a sort of local representative of *la vieille France*, but for some, the professor's conservative, old-world charm also had its dark side. Barbara Bowen, a professor of sixteenth-century French literature who has been teaching at Vanderbilt since 1987, describes Pichois as "an extremely narrow-minded, prejudiced old gentleman." That said, she adds, "One cannot expect one's colleagues to all be perfect."

Some of Pichois's alleged antipathies, say colleagues, fell along national lines. "He doesn't like people from Switzerland," says Bowen. "That was [Baehler's] main defect." According to Froment-Meurice, these feelings were "a matter of intellectual stance" emanating from Pichois's admiration for Baudelaire and Baudelaire's dislike of the Swiss-born philosopher Jean-Jacques

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CLAUDE SIMON AND ALINE BAEHLER

COURTESY ALINE BAEHLER

THE CHAIR OF NYU'S FRENCH DEPARTMENT REMEMBERS ALINE BAEHLER AS "ONE OF THE VERY, VERY BRIGHTEST STUDENTS" THE DEPARTMENT HAD EVER HAD.

Rousseau. "Rousseau is in favor of nature," he explains, "and of course this is the complete opposite of Baudelaire,...[who believed that] man is naturally evil or bad." But such explanations went only so far. In one of the secretly taped conversations, Patricia Ward, then department chair, explained to Baehler that Pichois once made "*une critique sévère*" of a potential hire simply "*parce qu'il n'aime pas des Polonais*"—because he doesn't like Polish people. Ultimately, the woman was not hired. In the same conversation, Baehler repeatedly asked Ward what Pichois might have against her personally. "*Il y a des accents,*" said Ward at one point. "*Il y a des choses différentes.*"

When I contacted Pichois to discuss these and other allegations, he declined to be interviewed. Since he had retired from Vanderbilt nearly two years earlier, he believed there was "*aucune raison*" to speak to me for this story. But Pichois's friend and former student, Balzac biographer Graham Robb, says Pichois is "the opposite of prejudiced." According to Robb, "The thing that makes Pichois a good literary scholar is that he is able to understand points of view that are very different from his own. If he were a prejudiced person, I don't think he would be a very good literary scholar."

THE problem Pichois had with Baehler wasn't personal—not at first, at least.

As Ward noted in Baehler's file, Pichois was absent when a new position in the modern novel, for which Baehler ultimately would be hired, was defined. He had wanted the department to appoint a nineteenth-century specialist who did historically based scholarship. His colleagues, however, wanted someone more contemporary and cutting-edge—a literary critic, not a philologist—and while interviewing those sorts of candidates, they happened upon Baehler. Although her specialty was literary theory, the fact that she could also teach feminism, and was willing to, made her attractive to Vanderbilt, which had gaping holes in both subjects.

In the spring of 1996, Baehler went for her campus interview, to meet with each of her would-be colleagues. Her meeting with Pichois lasted about ten minutes, but the exchange was thoroughly polite and professional. They talked of Switzerland, where Pichois had taught for some years before moving to the Sorbonne. We are just opposites, Pichois told her, referring to the fact that he had once moved from France to Switzerland, and she had done the reverse. Since he did not mention her writing, Baehler asked him if he had read her dissertation. No, he hadn't. What about the article she had published in *La Nouvelle Revue Française,* in which she describes her visit to Rousseau's tomb? Oh yes, he told her. It was refreshing to find such a piece in the *NRF.* Baehler took

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it as a compliment. But when she gave a sample lecture to the department on André Breton and his fascination with kitsch objects, Pichois was not pleased. Her talk, he later told Crist, had been *une salade,* a jumbled mess.

Pichois's colleagues did not concur. They were impressed by Baehler's talk, as well as her writing, and felt strongly that she was just the right sort of person to teach the subjects they'd been ill equipped to handle for so long. When it was time to decide, Pichois opposed Baehler's appointment, but he was outvoted by her supporters. Perhaps the others, who normally heeded Pichois's views, were mindful of the fact that he would soon be retiring, or perhaps they simply wanted Baehler badly enough to risk clashing with their senior colleague. Regardless, when Pichois learned that Baehler had been hired in spite of his protest, he is rumored to have told a colleague that it was now simply a question of honor: He would put *des bâtons dans ses roues,* sticks in the spokes of her bicycle. "I'm not a Christian," he told Larry Crist. "And therefore if I hate someone, I hate them."

A SENIOR faculty member of Pichois's intellectual stature is bound to wield considerable influence in a department. But according to some colleagues, the situation at Vanderbilt was exceptional. After all, Pichois was not only a star scholar; he was also a benefactor.

Although acquaintances have often mistaken Pichois for an aristocrat, his fortune derives from his family's grocery business. Since 1984, he has underwritten the Claude and Vincenette Pichois Scholarship, which awards a yearly dissertation fellowship to a student in Vanderbilt's French department. (Some years, the scholarship instead goes to a pair of undergraduates.) According to the dean of the college, by 1997 Pichois's contributions totaled $173,000—but French department members involved with disbursing the funds name a figure closer to $400,000. By the time Baehler arrived on campus, Pichois had also drafted a will in which he designated Vanderbilt University the ultimate beneficiary of his more than $1 million in assets. But his planned gift is by no means certain, as it would be had he established, say, an irrevocable trust. "It's prearranged, yes," explains Pichois's financial adviser, Woodrow Richardson, "but one can change one's will anytime one wants to."

According to Crist, who retired last year, Pichois's donations bought him no influence over academic affairs. "That's fairly clear," he says blithely. "I didn't see him throwing his weight around. Now, we listened to his opinion with great care, but it wasn't the last word—always." Other colleagues are more skeptical. As Ward explained to Baehler in one of their recorded conversations: "During his entire career here, [Pichois] did things like call professors before votes on nominations in order to assure that [the candidate he preferred] was appointed.... You were the first person [over whom] he lost the vote." Indeed, another professor remembers only one situation before the Baehler vote in which Pichois and his colleagues were at loggerheads over a hire. It was about ten years ago: "We had narrowed the field down to three candidates. Pichois told us one was unacceptable, and somehow or another that candidate got lost."

I asked department veteran Luigi Monga whether it was true, as I had been told, that Pichois used to present his colleagues with a list of the graduate students he wanted admitted to the department each year, and that each year his wishes would be granted. Monga says Pichois was "smarter than that. He was not an open bully." As for whether Pichois is controlling the department in spite of his retirement, Monga scoffs: "When a person is gone from Vanderbilt, that person is dead, even if that person has lots of money to give to Vanderbilt. I don't think he has any influence."

Nonetheless, an assessment by a member of the department's January 1999 external review committee is particularly stark. Says Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, a professor of comparative literature at Stanford: "There were senior faculty from that French department who had basically for years yielded on their knees to Pichois's power." In a letter to the review committee chair suggesting several issues for inclusion in their report, Gumbrecht described the situation thus: "It is my opinion that our assessment of the 'Pichois-scandal' at Vanderbilt is that of a serious threat to the university.... It cannot be completely excluded that academic influence and the 'freedom' for harassment, and even for racial slurs, has been bought through donations. The University would be ill-advised not to take this situation very seriously."

According to the dean of the college at the time, Ettore Infante, those statements were not incorporated into the review document that Vanderbilt received. But, he adds, he had already looked into the matter of Pichois's influence. "I did a considerable amount of investigation," he says. "All the donations that Professor Pichois made...were donations he made for the support of the graduate students—graduate students who were fundamentally in many cases working with him—so any implication that somehow donations were made for the implementation of policies or particular decisions, as far as I'm concerned, there was absolutely no basis for that."

Another member of the review committee, Elaine Marks, a professor of French and women's studies at the University of Wisconsin and a former president of the MLA, calls Gumbrecht's conclusions "overly dramatic." Marks observes that "certainly the senior people in any department have a lot of influence." The case of Pichois was not particularly remarkable; and as for the Vanderbilt French department, she says, "My sense was that it was quite a small department that was doing quite well."

BACK IN 1996, the year Aline Baehler arrived at Vanderbilt, Pichois's influence was not something that would immediately concern a new junior faculty member. Besides, Baehler had a great many reasons for optimism. She quickly impressed her students as hip, witty, and outspoken. Graduate student Heather Garrett cites Baehler as one of the reasons she came to Vanderbilt: "She's just one of those rare brilliant professors who really helps you apply theory to literature, but she gives you a direction to go in so you're not drowning in books." In a report on her observation of Baehler's teaching, Ward described Baehler as a "skilled Socratic questioner who has a strong classroom personality" and as an "intense teacher who respects her students." "Everybody liked her," says Barbara Bowen. "She was a valued colleague and teacher. She took part in all the extracurricular things we do in the department, and several of my colleagues thought of her as a friend."

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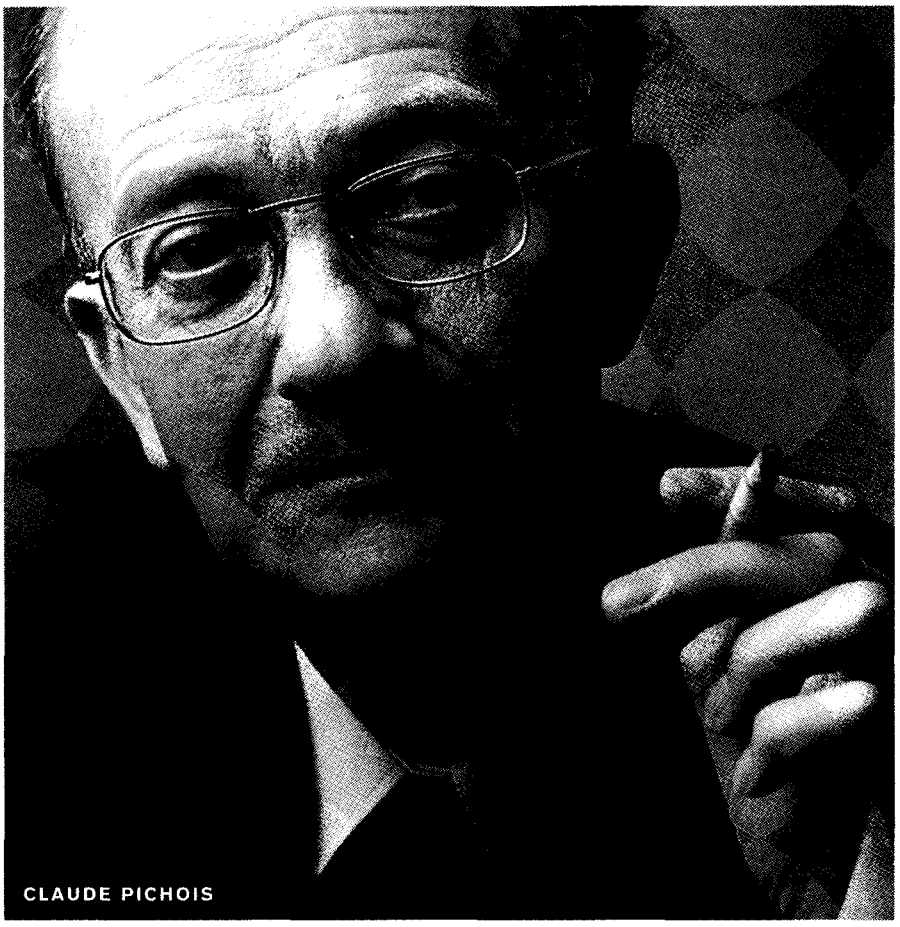
For the most part, on the rare occasions when their paths crossed, Pichois ignored Baehler. When he did speak to her, it was usually in order to correct her French. Whereas her colleagues would defer to Pichois, abstaining from contemporary language in his presence because he considered it vulgar—they would, for example, drop the colloquial "*ouais*" in favor of the formal "*oui*" that Pichois preferred—Baehler refused to follow the convention, thinking it ridiculous.

When Baehler wasn't around, Pichois referred to her as *la Suissesse,* the Swiss woman, "which she is in fact—it was just that he didn't like Swiss women," explains Bowen. Baehler also contends that Pichois spread the rumor that she was a lesbian. Although the rumor wasn't true—Baehler believes he based it on the facts that at the time she was unmarried, taught feminism, and had been strongly supported in her appointment by a lesbian member of the department—it was no small issue on the fairly conservative Vanderbilt campus. Patricia Pierce, the director of the university's Opportunity Development Center, would later write in her investigation into Baehler's allegations: "I did verify during my interviews with some of the faculty members that there were rumors about [Baehler's] sexual orientation during [her] first year at Vanderbilt. However, these individuals reported that they did not believe the rumors nor did they give them any credibility."

Nonetheless, Baehler's experience at Vanderbilt had begun a downward spiral. At the start of her second semester, Baehler reports, two graduate students informed her that Pichois had forbidden them to work with her. Baehler was outraged, and she was also anxious. If she were deprived of the opportunity to mentor graduate students in her field, would she be penalized at a later stage, such as when she came up for tenure? Concerned, she called a meeting with department chair Patricia Ward.

As a relative newcomer to the department, and one who took her administrative responsibilities rather seriously, Ward was perhaps the best suited of all her colleagues for what had once seemed an unthinkable task: loosening the department from the grip of Pichois. And if there is a consensus about anything in the fractious Vanderbilt French department, it is that Ward did her best to defend Baehler and that Baehler, inexplicably, repaid her with betrayal. (In June of last year, at the end of what one colleague calls her "annus horribilis," Ward stepped down from the chairmanship and took a yearlong sabbatical.)



CLAUDE PICHOIS

COLLEAGUES ABSTAINED FROM CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE IN PICHOIS'S PRESENCE BECAUSE HE CONSIDERED IT VULGAR.

During their February 1997 meeting, Ward apologized for "the unprofessional behavior of my colleagues" and tried to allay Baehler's concerns about her academic future. In a memo Ward filed about their discussion, she described her efforts to remedy the situation: "...upon reflection of the legal consequences of Professor Baehler's report, I spoke with [acting] Dean [of the college Jacques] Voegeli and asked if he could find a way to caution Professor Pichois when he meets with him to discuss his teaching arrangement for next year." According to Ward, Baehler later communicated that she would prefer Voegeli not speak to Pichois. And Ward maintains that she left Voegeli a message to that effect.

In the meantime, Baehler's colleagues were reiterating their support for her and counseling her to ignore Pichois, whom they reminded her would soon retire. Those reassurances, combined with the satisfaction that she was getting from teaching, enabled Baehler to put the unpleasantness behind her. She did, and was happy for a time.

But with the spring came a series of troubling episodes that stoked Baehler's growing sense of alienation. At a party at Barbara Bowen's home, Bowen asked Baehler not to enter the designated smoking room where Pichois was holding court. "It might be nice if we could avoid

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confrontation," Bowen told Baehler by way of explanation. Baehler was stunned. "Are you kidding?" she asked, but decided to comply, not wanting to cause a scene. "What's so terrible about that?" replies Bowen when I ask about the episode. "I prefer not to have people scratching their eyes out at my parties. I prefer to have cordial parties, but I can't see that that's so terrible. [Aline] has certainly been digging up every conceivable incident that she can think of, hasn't she?"

Some months later, another incident set Baehler on edge. The French department and its students had been gathering for a series of get-togethers known as La Table Ronde. At one such meeting, Baehler referred to Editions de Minuit, the Parisian publishing house that published Samuel Beckett in the 1950s (and somewhat later became a major publisher of the *nouveau roman*), as an "avant-garde" press. Before she could even complete her thought, Froment-Meurice, who some saw as Pichois's ally, cut her off. "This is incredible!" he shouted. "*N'importe quoi! Pas du tout!* There is nothing more dumb than to speak about the avant-garde!" Baehler was shocked. "I think Monsieur Pichois made a comment kind of approving what Marc Froment-Meurice said," recalls a graduate student who was there, "and maybe because of the respect for Pichois, no one else dared to defend her or her statement."

Later that night, the graduate students gathered to discuss the incident. "We said to each other how inappropriate it was," recalls the student. "Because of events like that, we decided to cancel [the series]."

"Yes, I did say that," confirms Froment-Meurice with a laugh. "So what? After that I said that I did realize that I was going too far, and I did make a public apology, so there." It is the French thing, he tells me, "just expressing loudly what you think, but then after, forgetting, just going to another topic.... It's like freedom of speech. You can say whatever you think is right." But even after Froment-Meurice's apology, Baehler never spoke to him again.

THE FOLLOWING fall, at the start of Baehler's second year, she caught wind of some surprising news: Dean Voegeli's cautionary talk with Pichois had never taken place. According to Baehler, she had never asked Ward to preempt Voegeli's intervention; in fact, she had been mollified by the prospect that the dean would soon intercede on her behalf. (For his part, Voegeli claims he does not recall Ward ever discussing the matter with him. "I don't know if she did or she didn't," he says. "It's been three years...") Disenchanted with the fractious department and provincial Nashville, Baehler was already applying for positions elsewhere. But she was still enjoying her teaching, and her student evaluations spoke for her continued popularity in the classroom. Anyway, Dean Voegeli was retiring, and Baehler hoped the new dean of the college, mathematician Ettore Infante, might be more inclined to act on her behalf.

A diminutive man whose office is decorated with an improbable mix of Japanese porcelain, a huge nineteenth-century harbor painting, and a yellow smiley-face doll, Infante is difficult to read. The cap and gown hanging on his coat tree give the impression of a jaunty academic, but Infante's attire—a blue blazer with gold buttons—and his European good manners convey a more corporate approach. At their meeting, Baehler told the new dean about her problems with Pichois and how she felt his bias against her was interfering with her career. Was there anything in particular, Infante asked her, that she would like him to do? "I asked him to stop the harassment in this situation," Baehler recalls. But Infante denies she ever said that. "Her answer was 'No,'" he insists. "What she said to me was that she wanted to make really sure that she was going to be judged on her performance as a teacher and a scholar, and I said to her, 'That certainly is my intention and that of any institution of the type of Vanderbilt.' She said that she didn't want to be discriminated against, and I assured her that as far as it was in my power, that that would be the case."

THAT WINTER, the university began considering whether to renew Baehler's contract, which would be expiring in the spring. Typically renewals are pro forma. But Ward gave Baehler some disappointing news: Pichois had written a negative evaluation of her scholarship—he was the sole member of the department to do so—and he had forwarded his evaluation directly to Dean Infante.

Although Infante renewed Baehler's contract, Pichois's letter seemed a blow to Baehler's nascent Vanderbilt career. Still, it wasn't until the following fall, once Pichois was gone, that Baehler learned of the disturbing chain of events the letter had set in motion. In his official renewal of Baehler's contract, Infante was less than enthusiastic, and he cited Pichois's criticism of Baehler's work—in particular, Pichois's contention that her book manuscript was so much "soap criticism." (When asked on what he based his review, Infante, who never attended any of Baehler's classes nor read any of her work, says: "I did the standard review that is done for every faculty member.")

Ward immediately sprang into action on Baehler's behalf, writing a point-by-point rebuttal of Infante's evaluation in which she noted, "The department gave a much more positive assessment of Professor Baehler's teaching than your memo of June 16 gives; we regret the negative and non-encouraging tone of your assessment." While "Professor Pichois's reservations are, in part, due to feelings of deep personal antipathy related to the circumstances of Baehler's appointment," the current tenured faculty do not, despite their "immense respect for him," accept "Pichois's criticism of Baehler's work." On the contrary, the department "finds [Baehler's] work to be original and creative."

Ward then went a step further and asked Larry Crist, the former chair who likes to refer to himself half jokingly as the "depository of all departmental wisdom and history," for his opinion on Infante's remarks. "I find [Infante's] comments unfair," he wrote in a memo to Ward, "but not so absolutely devastating. I find your responses judicious and non-combative. The eventual problem, it seems to me, is [the dean's] excessive evaluation of CP's [Claude Pichois's] criticism." Crist then wrote a formal letter to Ward in which he attacked Pichois's dismissal of Baehler's work as "soap criticism." Wrote Crist:

> I have wrestled with the meaning of this locution, casting it into French even, but can come forth with no philologically acceptable meaning.... "Soap criticism" as a pejorative, either in English or as "critique de savon/critique savonneuse" in French...has *no meaning* and thus cannot be, in any academically legitimate way, used in judgment, much less as a pejorative judgment, and must, in all honesty, be thrown out of court.... I

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> am disappointed to see a valued junior colleague depressed by a comment on her scholarship, which comment is ambiguous and opaque, to say the least.... [This memo] is not meant to be a criticism of [the Dean] but the expression of concern about a possible injustice, from one who still regards him as a colleague and not as Pope.

For his part, Infante insists that his evaluation of Baehler was simply meant to be constructive—to suggest what Baehler "should be helped and mentored into doing in order to continue to demonstrate progress"—and that "any dispassionate person" would see it that way. "I did *not* write a negative evaluation of her," he tells me. "Look—had I written a negative evaluation, she wouldn't have been reappointed. Come on!"

Although Ward kept Baehler well informed of the efforts under way on her behalf, Baehler's anxiety was transmogrifying into a sort of desperation. All along, her colleagues had told her that Pichois's opinions had little currency, that he was on his way out, after all—who cared what the old man thought? But Infante's evaluation was an unpleasant legacy, one that would outlast Pichois's Vanderbilt career and, Baehler feared, possibly ruin her own.

JUST AS SHE WAS in the midst of the crisis over Infante's evaluation, Baehler also found herself embroiled in two others. The first involved her sabbatical. According to Vanderbilt policy, assistant professors can apply to take a research leave for their fourth year. Baehler, who had given birth to her daughter in May of her second year, had spent much of her summer nursing. She was behind in her research and felt she needed the sabbatical to secure publication for either her dissertation or her second manuscript, which was about literary kitsch.

According to Baehler, Ward discouraged her from taking the time off. "I'm reluctant to give you a one year sabbatical because you have been treated so badly," Baehler says Ward told her. "I'm afraid you will not come back."

Ward declined an interview for this story, addressing the issue with a prepared statement instead: "A memo from the departmental chair recommending with enthusiasm Aline Baehler's request for a yearlong research leave was submitted to the office of the dean of arts and sciences according to the mandated deadline in December of 1998."

What exactly was said between Ward and Baehler in their conversations on the subject only they will know. What is clear is that Baehler was growing increasingly distrustful of her colleagues, and it was at this time that she began tape-recording Ward. "I was taping in order to have proof of the harassment," Baehler says. "I had no break, because when Pichois left I had a problem with Infante, who was following Pichois's advice, and Pat Ward, who was trying not to give me my sabbatical."

Although she read Ward's response to Infante's evaluation, Baehler, rather remarkably, believes Ward was not helping her in any way. "She was trying to defend the position of the department," insists Baehler. "She was not helping me at all.... Is that helping to tell me I'm afraid you will not come back so I will not give you this time to write and research? I had no exit."

The next firestorm—the one that ultimately led to Baehler's alienation not just from Ward but from the French department—involved the notoriously slippery allegation of student plagiarism and the even more explosive accusation that the alleged plagiarism had been deliberately overlooked, as her lawyer later claimed in a letter on Baehler's behalf, "as a means toward maintaining the few graduate students enrolled in the Department."

After Pichois retired in the spring of 1998, Ward asked Baehler to chair her first doctoral dissertation committee. There was just one hitch, Baehler soon found out: Two professors had previously accused this student of plagiarism but never reported their suspicions to the Honor Council, which normally handles such affairs. Instead, they had dealt with the matter internally, with reprimands and low grades.

According to Baehler, the dissertation proposal that the student submitted the following summer was rife with unattributed passages lifted verbatim out of books. But when Baehler brought the issue up at a committee meeting, the subject was quickly dropped. All of her colleagues voted to pass the student; because she believed the student's work was plagiarized, Baehler abstained from the vote.

When Ward told Baehler it would be inappropriate for a student's chair to abstain, Baehler resigned from the student's committee. She then wrote a letter for the student's records explaining the reason for her resignation, but the letter never made it into the file. "They ask me to cover this up, and I refuse," says Baehler. "And then I had everyone against me, not just Pichois."

Baehler's certainty about the student's plagiarism and her disapproval of her colleagues' inaction on the matter raise the question of why she did not report the incident to the Honor Council herself.

IN HIS RENEWAL OF BAEHLER'S CONTRACT, DEAN INFANTE CITED PICHOIS'S CONTENTION THAT HER WORK WAS SO MUCH "SOAP CRITICISM." SAYS LARRY CRIST, THE TERM HAS "NO MEANING."

COURTESY JEFFREY DUBAN; VANDERBILT REGISTER; VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

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"Everybody was lying," she says. "I decided it would be too dangerous for me to go report the thing somewhere. I first wanted an investigation about the manipulation of files in the department."

As one might imagine, Baehler's claims are the subject of great controversy in the French department. The director of graduate studies, Dan Church, insists that he withheld Baehler's concerns from the student's file as a favor to Baehler. "I told her this: 'I'm protecting you because it's your job to report plagiarism if there's plagiarism.'" Department member Luigi Monga says he viewed Baehler's allegation of plagiarism as "probably a very inelegant way for her to get out of the committee." Still, he concedes, "Nobody asked her what exactly the plagiarism was. In hindsight I probably should have said, 'Where is the plagiarism in this text?'" Monga also concedes that there is a "certain concern" about the number of graduate students in the department. "The quality of the graduate students," he laments, "has gone down the drain."

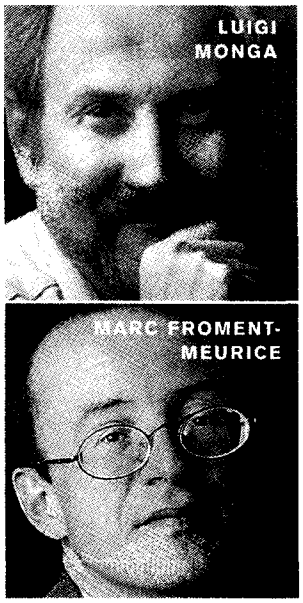
Faced with what she viewed as an impossible situation, Baehler responded with the ultimate American touché: She hired an attorney.

TO THE PROFESSOR at odds with her employer, Jeffrey Duban seems a godsend. A former Georgia State University classics professor, he advertises himself in *Lingua Franca* as an advocate for disgruntled faculty and students. (After being denied tenure in 1982, he lost a five-year battle against GSU both at trial and then again on appeal.)

Over Christmas break, Baehler told Duban she had two chief concerns: getting a one-year sabbatical, and eradicating Pichois's and Infante's reviews from her tenure dossier. Duban told Baehler that if she wanted the sabbatical, she should "take the offensive" immediately, rather than waiting until January to receive the university's response to her request, as she had planned. Although he made no promises, Duban told Baehler that there was a good chance he could get her the sabbatical and get her bought out of the remainder of her contract. He had managed several buyouts in the preceding years, he told her, and if the case went to litigation, Baehler stood to win at least one or two years' salary.

But Duban also issued a warning about the risk of taking aggressive action against a major institution: If you think you have problems now at Vanderbilt, he told her, it could get worse. No matter, Baehler was elated. She had been feeling trapped at Vanderbilt, miserable for the foreseeable future. At last, here was someone who understood her situation, someone who could help her.

In January, Duban sent Vanderbilt a free-ranging missive. Suddenly, Baehler was not just trying to obtain a one-year sabbatical and find a resolution to her two and a half years of trouble with Claude Pichois. Rather, the letter hurled a *j'accuse* at Patricia Ward too, whom it termed "a Pichois appointee." "By threatening to withhold a promised sabbatical, Patricia Ward continues to abuse and discriminate against Professor Baehler," Duban charged. And not only had the department tolerated "Pichois's rampant hostility," but it had also required Baehler "to pass a graduate student whose work she had found to be plagiarized." "Unless remedial action is immediately taken," Duban threatened, "co-defendants in the contemplated legal action may sooner look to paying a judgement in Professor Baehler's favor than benefiting from a Pichois bequest."


LUIGI MONGA

MARC FROMENT-MEURICE

WHEN BAEHLER CALLED A PARISIAN PUBLISHER "AVANT-GARDE," FROMENT-MEURICE EXCLAIMED, "THERE IS NOTHING MORE DUMB THAN TO SPEAK ABOUT THE AVANT-GARDE!" HE LATER APOLOGIZED.

Within days came an auspicious omen: news that Baehler had gotten her one-year sabbatical. Shortly thereafter, the university launched two internal investigations to examine Baehler's complaints. The first, managed by George Graham, Jr., then associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, focused on the alleged cover-up of plagiarism in the French department. The probe infuriated Baehler's colleagues and, with its relentless written exchanges, provided the increasingly alienated scholar an opportunity to vent her fury: "It is clear that by misplacing and falsifying these documents the Department of French and Italian was attempting to entrap me," she wrote Dean Graham last March. "I regret to inform you that I have found a way to correct the situation on my own: I cannot anymore expose myself without protection. If I am forced to go to the Honor Council before you correct these official files, and before others are forced to appear before this body, I will do so under protest, and I will hold a public press conference to explain the situation."

Ultimately, it was this Nancy Drew–meets–Don Corleone approach that convinced Baehler's colleagues that she had gone, as Barbara Bowen puts it, "completely off the rails." The same tactics also foreclosed the possibility of a buyout. Explains Infante: "There is a difference between facilitating something that makes sense and buying somebody out, especially with the implication that 'unless you do it, I'm going to squeal,' which is the way that I perceived it."

In the end, the plagiarism investigation hardly provided the vindication Baehler may have hoped for. In an extensive report issued in April 1999, Dean Graham concluded: "The decision...not to report the case to the Honor Council no doubt was

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY (2)

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seen differently by those interviewed. Probably no one would want to take the step lightly. *What seems clear to me is that there was then no conspiracy to cover up the plagiarism in order to achieve other goals.... It is clear to me that a program of information on Honor Council issues would help avoid such confusions in the future."*

The second investigation was conducted by Patricia Pierce of the Opportunity Development Center. It took up the question of whether Baehler's career had been damaged by sex and national-origin discrimination. "Your progression through the tenure process has gone according to the *Faculty Manual*," Pierce wrote. "You received two grants during your first year; you were reappointed for two years; your tenure clock was stopped for six months during your pregnancy; you have a desirable teaching schedule; you have taught a graduate course; you chaired a dissertation committee; and you were granted a sabbatical." The conclusion was that Baehler had no case.

ON THE LAST DAY of April 1999, just before she left Nashville for her sabbatical, Baehler met with Dean Infante. "This is a time to reestablish that sense of trust which is very badly frayed by the actions you have taken," he told her. "What is it you intend to do?" Baehler's reply was that as the injured party, she did not feel it was incumbent on her to reestablish communication. "I'm sorry to say," Infante recalls, "that was a meeting that went nowhere."

During the year of her leave, a year that, save for a few months in France for research, Baehler spent revisiting her old haunts in New York, Baehler dodged Vanderbilt. Phone calls and e-mails from the new department chair, Virginia Scott, asking what courses she wanted to teach in the next year went unreturned. Then, in February 2000, Baehler sent an angry letter to Vanderbilt's provost, Thomas Burish. In the letter Baehler alleged that Scott had offered Baehler's post to an adjunct in the department, and that "Professor Scott has informed faculty members that she does not want me back..." (Baehler says the allegations were based on a tip from someone who claimed to be in the know.)

The response came from Dean Infante, who denied Baehler's charges with obvious exasperation: "I cannot but voice my disappointment at receiving a copy of your letter... to Provost Burish, the first communication since May 28, 1999, received from you by any officer at Vanderbilt, despite repeated attempts to contact you.... May I say that your lack of responsiveness and contact with Professor Scott is not only uncollegial, but unacceptable on the part of a member of the faculty whose leave is being paid by the university."

I FIRST MET Baehler on a hot summer Friday, at a French café in Nolita, a trendy Manhattan neighborhood known for its purse shops. As I watched her approach, pushing her daughter along in her stroller, Baehler looked like a chic New York mother. She spoke with a thick European accent, and after interrogating me—had I done this sort of thing before? she wanted to know; could I speak French?—Baehler launched into her story, recounting it with such intensity that she hardly seemed aware of her surroundings.

Baehler spoke of her colleagues with vitriol and grand hyperbole. Pichois "bought the department" and is "tacky society trying to imitate aristocracy." She likened one colleague to the Gestapo, but then changed her mind: "Like the Jewish working for the Gestapo, I mean." Another colleague, she said, was both "a drunk" and "quite insane"; yet another was "a complete bitch." She wavered on Dean Infante, first referring to him as a "mafioso" and then later changing her assessment to a "little Napoleon." Everything, it seemed, was related to her case. Larry Crist's retirement: "He couldn't stand the situation anymore." Virginia Scott's promotion to chair: "She took advantage of my position." "These people are pathological liars," she said, starting to cry.

Now, one year later, with no settlement forthcoming, Baehler is preparing to return to Nashville this fall to teach for three semesters. "It's part of my contract," she tells me. "They can sue me if I don't come back." As for finding her next university post, Baehler is less than optimistic. "I'm not really in a situation where I can find a job in academia," she says flatly.

"Anybody will call Vanderbilt. Who is going to hire somebody who taped her chair?"

Johanna Berkman is a contributing writer for *Worth*. Her articles have appeared in *New York* and *The New York Times*.

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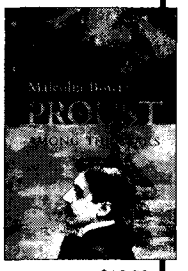

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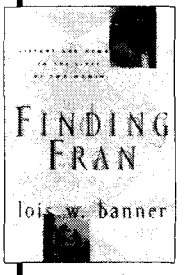

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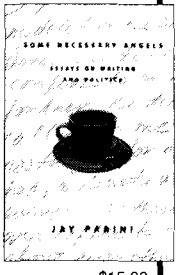

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A MILITANT

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STUDENT STRIKE SIDELINES MEXICAN INTELLECTUALS

BY **SCOTT SHERMAN**

UNAM STUDENT STRIKERS BURN EFFIGY OF RECTOR BARNÉS, NOVEMBER 1999

THE FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF Mexico's leftist daily newspaper *La Jornada* certainly seemed an occasion worth celebrating. Founded in 1984 with the assistance of Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez, and José Saramago, *La Jornada* is now one of Mexico's most influential and sophisticated newspapers. It came as little surprise that on September 13, 1999, several hundred journalists and intellectuals converged on a museum in Mexico City to applaud the paper's success. But just as the festivities came to a close, the party's distinguished guests found themselves under attack: Two hundred striking students from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) surrounded the museum. They hurled insults, trashed a vehicle owned by the newspaper, and threatened to set fire to the door of the building.

Two days later, a somber editorial in *La Jornada* likened the incident to those incited by fascist students during the Spanish civil war, and thirty-six intellectuals dispatched a letter of solidarity to the beleaguered newspaper staff. The student movement's General Strike Council, known as the CGH, attributed the violence at the museum to a small breakaway faction. But to some observers, the *Jornada* incident illuminated a generational rupture of startling proportions. Writers, artists, and professors who, in the past, had been closely linked to social movements were now at odds with the student rebels.

In his graceful, elegiac *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War* (Knopf), Jorge G. Castañeda highlighted the "central function" of Latin American intellectuals: "Keepers of the national consciousness, critics and constant demanders of accountability, bulwarks of principle and honesty." While many Mexican intellectuals are enticed by government grants and jobs,

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a good number fulfill this watchdog function. Since the 1960s, intellectuals have been involved, as participants, chroniclers, and public advocates, in countless battles on behalf of trade unions, gay rights, environmental justice, land reform, and feminism. In 1994 they lent considerable support to the Zapatista uprising, whose most visible spokesman, Subcomandante Marcos, is himself a former Mexico City intellectual who reportedly studied at UNAM in the 1970s and retains a taste for the works of William Shakespeare, Federico García Lorca, and Julio Cortázar. In July 1994, six thousand intellectuals and activists ventured into the sweltering Lacandón jungle for a "National Democratic Convention" hosted by the Zapatistas.

It would seem only natural for the same writers and thinkers to throw their weight behind a movement that one imprisoned leader has called "the first rebellion organized by young people in the center of the country, against the alienating social and cultural dynamic of neoliberalism." But something about the yearlong UNAM strike—or something about the current disposition of Mexico's intellectuals—has split a traditional left-wing alliance in two.

UNAM, which rests on two thousand acres in the southern outskirts of Mexico City, is a world unto itself. With 270,000 students, 28,000 professors, and 26,000 administrative workers, it earns its title: University City. The bustling main campus, strewn with volcanic rock, is ringed by mountains whose contours are barely visible behind a wall of smog and haze.

Founded in the sixteenth century, UNAM is Mexico's preeminent university, the site of most of the nation's academic and scientific research. Nevertheless, recent decades have witnessed its steady decline—especially since Mexico's economic downturn began, in 1982. Today, UNAM's facilities are decrepit and antiquated, faculty salaries are abysmal, and some observers insist that academic standards have deteriorated. "UNAM graduates need not apply" is a common refrain in newspaper want ads. Increasingly, students with economic resources choose to attend Mexico City's private universities.

UNAM is officially autonomous, but the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)—which has clung to power in Mexico since 1929 through an adroit synthesis of coercion, co-optation, patronage, and ruthlessness—is deeply involved in its day-to-day affairs. UNAM's rector, for instance, is chosen by the PRI's ruling elite, and the upper echelon of university bureaucrats tend to work in his employ. To harass and contain left-wing student organizations, the authorities created an elaborate network of paid student provocateurs in the 1950s. These students, known as *porros*, are frequently recruited from the capital's tough shantytowns, and they are capable of stunning violence and mayhem. "The UNAM, like the state oil monopoly, has historically been contested symbolic terrain, a theater of values where university and non-university political conflicts are played out," says David Lorey of the Hewlett Foundation, who writes on higher education in Mexico.

Mexico is a country with a permanent student movement. In 1968 UNAM students spearheaded a massive revolt against the authoritarian regime of President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. Díaz Ordaz saw the student movement as a communist-inspired effort to undermine Mexico's sponsorship of the Olympic Games, and he ordered soldiers to suppress a demonstration in Tlatelolco Plaza. The military operation left hundreds dead and wounded, prompting Octavio Paz, a leading Mexican intellectual, to resign his ambassadorship to India in protest. Despite the government's efforts to cloak the details of the massacre in secrecy, Tlatelolco remains a pivotal event in recent Mexican history.

It was into this politically volatile arena that UNAM's rector, Francisco Barnés, introduced a plan to raise fees from a symbolic two cents to approximately $150 per year. Barnés knew it would not be easy: In 1987, when the administration tried to impose fees, students shut the university down for three weeks, and the plan was scrapped. A second attempt in 1992 was also defeated. This time, in February 1999, Barnés insisted that the fees would be used for scholarships for needy students and for improvements in libraries, labs, and computer facilities. To soften the proposal, he offered students who could not afford the new fees the right to request an exemption, and his plan contained a grandfather clause: The fees would only apply to incoming students.

Campus organizations nevertheless denounced the "Barnés plan." They argued that many UNAM students come from families with scant financial resources. The plan, opponents added, was simply the latest step in the PRI's inexorable march toward economic privatization. Because the Mexican government had already privatized the telecommunications, banking, and railroad sectors—and were considering electricity and petroleum as well—the students feared that higher education was next on the list. (1997 World Bank documents recommending the imposition of tuition fees in Mexico's public universities bolstered the protesters' arguments.) Students threatened a general strike if the plan went into effect.

The University Council, which is largely controlled by the rector, convened to vote

on the plan on March 15. In an attempt to evade student demonstrators and delegates opposed to the plan, the meeting was moved at the last minute to an off-campus facility. Students were outraged, and so was the general public. The council's maneuver recalled the darkest days of the PRI's authoritarian rule, when congress and the press were servile and opposition parties virtually nonexistent.

On April 20, twenty-seven of UNAM's thirty-six schools went on strike, leaving 223,000 students without classes. Only scientific and research institutes remained open. The CGH issued a six-point petition outlining its demands, which included the abolition of all student fees, a congress to restructure the university along democratic lines, and the destruction of the campuswide police infrastructure. Students occupied university buildings, turning

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auditoriums into makeshift dorms and classrooms into communal kitchens. Banners blared: ZAPATA SAID THE LAND BELONGS TO THOSE WHO WORK IT; WE SAY THAT THE UNIVERSITY BELONGS TO THOSE WHO STUDY IN IT and WE ARE CLOSING THE UNIVERSITY TODAY SO THAT TOMORROW IT WILL BE FOR EVERYONE. Three days into the strike, seventy thousand students and citizens marched in support of the movement. Subcomandante Marcos, in a letter to *La Jornada,* assailed the "Barnés plan" as an attempt "to divide students into two types—those who can afford to pay, and those who can't"—and celebrated the birth of a new student movement that was "rebellious, defiant, critical, ingenious, creative, skeptical, brave."

FOR NEARLY two months UNAM was paralyzed by continuous protests. No classes met. Finally, on June 7, Barnés dropped his tuition scheme. But while the rector backed down on tuition, his decree allowed various departments and schools to continue charging fees for a wide range of services, including exams, English classes, and laboratory access. Some sectors of the CGH viewed Barnés's reversal as a victory for the movement and argued for an end to the strike. But other students insisted on full compliance with the CGH petition, which demanded an end to all cash transactions within UNAM. After all, many UNAM students could barely afford subway fare, much less student fees, and they questioned federal spending priorities. "Last year the government spent $77 billion to rescue dozens of banks controlled by the wealthiest families in Mexico," says Cristina Ochoa, a second-year political science student. "Yet they refuse to spend a fraction of 1 percent of that sum to preserve *gratuidad* and strengthen UNAM."

Although the CGH contained dozens of ideological currents, from liberal to Trotskyist, after June 7 it was cleanly bifurcated in the eyes of the public. The press started to refer to "moderates," who desired a negotiated solution with the administration, and *ultras,* who were prepared to wage a long struggle on behalf of the CGH petition's six points. The marathon assemblies, which were active in dozens of schools and departments and which elected delegates to the CGH, became increasingly chaotic, routinely ending in fisticuffs and bloodshed. At one point, different factions in the CGH had to be separated by barbed wire. One's ability to pay fees often determined one's position on the strike, and the schism within the movement turned working-class students against middle-class students and Mesoamerican students against Spanish-American students. By summer, the CGH had embraced radical tactics: Students blocked major highways in the capital and closed down campus research institutes.

Extremely militant teenagers who attend the fourteen high schools attached to the UNAM system began to swell the movement's ranks. For decades, these high school students enjoyed automatic admission to the university if they maintained mid-level grade-point averages. Reforms enacted in 1997, however, raised admissions standards, introduced new standardized tests, and made it much more difficult to obtain the major of one's choice. Class-conscious teenagers, many of whom work to support their families, saw the reforms of 1997 as an attempt by the state to deprive them of a university education and to steer them toward technical schools. The restoration of the "automatic pass," ensuring these students a place in the university, became one point on the CGH petition.

By October, most of the moderates had departed: Some left in frustration; others

STRIKING STUDENT

ZAPATISTA PRESS CONFERENCE, AUGUST 1996

SPEAKING AT A PRESS CONFERENCE IN CHIAPAS, SUBCOMANDANTE MARCOS CELEBRATED THE BIRTH OF A NEW STUDENT MOVEMENT THAT WAS "CREATIVE, SKEPTICAL, BRAVE."

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were expelled by force from the assemblies. With the *ultras* in command, the movement became more rigid and confrontational, and public support ebbed. Young people from the most beleaguered sectors of Mexico City's lower-middle class—a class ravaged by the economic crisis of the last twenty years—now formed the nucleus of the movement. Their threadbare clothing, old shoes, and bad teeth attested to their limited resources. They called themselves *los jodidos*—"the fucked."

NEGOTIATIONS between the CGH and the rector proceeded fitfully until they were temporarily aborted in the wake of a suspicious incident on December 11.

That day, as CGH members converged in front of the U.S. embassy to protest the repression of demonstrators in Seattle, a melee ensued, and eighty-eight students were arrested. Newspaper reports, and the CGH, blamed agents provocateurs for the violence. But the government nonetheless felt it had the upper hand. A month later, the rector, with the assistance of the Interior Ministry, organized a university-wide plebiscite, in which an overwhelming majority voted for a return to classes. (The CGH, pointing to irregularities in the balloting, sponsored its own plebiscite, which resulted in a majority vote to continue the strike.) On February 1, a scuffle among strikers, anti-strikers, *porros,* and security personnel at UNAM's High School 3 triggered a large-scale riot. Once again, some newspaper accounts linked agents provocateurs to the violence, but the state-influenced TV networks blamed the CGH and proclaimed that events at UNAM were spinning out of control.

Five days later, at 6:30 A.M., 2,260 policemen entered the campus and surprised the sleeping students, who did not resist the invasion. Of the 737 students brought to prison, some were reportedly beaten and tortured. Memories of Tlatelolco stirred darkly around the episode, and on February 9, more than a hundred thousand people marched in Mexico City to protest the violation of the university's autonomy, the incarceration of students as young as fifteen, and the government's decision to use force.

The occupation of UNAM led to a prompt resumption of classes, but it did not destroy the CGH. Three months later, a group of approximately seven thousand hardened activists continue to stage an interminable stream of rallies, marches, and occupations, many of which end in brawls. Nine of the CGH's principal leaders remain in prison, while hundreds of other student activists are charged with various crimes and offenses. The campus is tense and divided: A large number of students are contemptuous of the CGH and desire a return to normalcy. Many others, however, support the CGH's demands regarding fees and a congress but express reservations about its militant tactics.

PRACTICALLY from the start, the UNAM conflict presented difficulties for the intellectuals, for it reopened a debate on the left about the virtues of electoral versus grassroots struggle. Many intellectuals are tied to the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), which, by choosing the electoral road to power, now governs the sprawling capital as well as numerous municipalities around the country. For many leftist intellectuals, the strike committee became a kind of Frankenstein's monster, whose uncompromising militancy threatened to undo the PRD's hard-earned electoral victories. Throughout the strike, the PRD's social-democratic posture clashed with the anarchist bent of the *ultras,* who detest political parties and who saw their fight as not simply against UNAM's administration but against the Mexican government; indeed, some in the CGH likened the movement to the student revolt that helped to bring down General Suharto in Indonesia.

Generational differences also came into play. "The students don't operate with a logic the intellectuals can understand," says Alejandro Moreno, a young critic who is writing a dissertation on the CGH. "They don't have a teleological vision. They don't believe in utopia. They don't have any hope. Their struggle is for today; tomorrow doesn't exist. It's a punk sensibility."

Some intellectuals quickly condemned the student mobilization. Writing in the August 1999 issue of the journal *Letras Libres,* the historian Enrique Krauze highlighted the CGH's "absolute disdain for democracy," its lack of a "historical vision," and its "intolerant...demagogic" style. Krauze, who also dubbed the strikers "the last nihilists," is a vocal champion of the 1968 student movement. But the new generation, he felt, sprang directly from the pages of Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons.* "We must not fear them or repress them," Krauze wrote. "We must defeat them with reason and the law." Others to the left of Krauze were conflicted. "The strikers are right about many things—about the injustice in the country, about the need for massive reform in the university—but their methods are deplorable," says UNAM sociologist Sergio Zermeño. "They fight with everyone. They exclude everyone. They are totally isolated as a result." The *ultras,* for their part, accused the intellectuals, who are overwhelmingly middle class, of safeguarding the status quo by defending the rector and backing the moderates.

By January the relationship between the intellectuals and the students had reached the boiling point. On February 3, a petition signed by eighty-nine of the nation's most distinguished intellectuals—including Carlos Fuentes, Jorge G. Castañeda, and Enrique Krauze—was printed in national newspapers. Denouncing the CGH as an "intolerant minority," the signatories demanded that the strike council accept the results of the official plebiscite and surrender the university at once. In many quarters, the petition—paid for by the rector's office—was interpreted as a declaration that the intellectuals would not

"BANKS, TELECOMMUNICATIONS, MARITIME PORTS—EVEN AIRPORTS—HAVE ALREADY BEEN PRIVATIZED," SAYS GARRIDO. "THE STUDENTS SAW THAT HIGHER EDUCATION WAS NEXT, AND THEY DECIDED TO RESIST."

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oppose a military solution. "When the intelligentsia placed its power and its prestige against what it called an 'intolerant minority,' it opened the doors of the jails and turned the keys over to the state," says Denise Dresser, a well-known political commentator. "The intellectuals abdicated their responsibility to maintain a critical distance vis-à-vis the established order and gave the government a blank check."

But not all of the signatories were prepared for the government's subsequent action: It was only three days after the petition was published that troops invaded the campus. Some intellectuals who signed the document immediately offered mea culpas. That very night, Elena Poniatowska—author of *Massacre in Mexico* (Missouri), the definitive account of the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre—burst into tears on national television, declaring, "I'm ashamed." Others, like Carlos Fuentes, responded by demanding the immediate release of all the student prisoners. But the student strikers nonetheless saw the petition as a stunning betrayal.

LUIS JAVIER GARRIDO WITH STUDENTS

COURTESY LUIS JAVIER GARRIDO

AT LEAST ONE Mexican intellectual never abandoned the student movement. Luis Javier Garrido teaches political science and law at UNAM and writes a column every Friday for *La Jornada*. Known for his honesty, his fierce independence, and his abrasive polemical style, Garrido is one of the paper's most radical contributors, and one of its most celebrated. The day after the invasion *La Jornada* asked five people, including Garrido, to write about recent events. "The students," Garrido thundered, "fought not only against the government but against the entire political class, from left to right: hence the enormous merit of their resistance."

Throughout the strike, Garrido regularly jousted with critics like Krauze in *La Jornada*'s letters column. He was, in the end, one of the only intellectuals the students trusted. Each week, his essays were blown up and pasted on the walls of campus buildings. During the interminable negotiations between the strikers and the administration, Garrido was frequently on hand to provide technical and strategic advice to the CGH. Forty-eight hours before the invasion, during a break in the talks, the rector spotted Garrido in the men's room. "Luis Javier, help me!" he implored. "Honor the six-point petition," Garrido snarled.

At fifty-eight, Garrido has a law degree from UNAM and a doctorate in political science from the Sorbonne. His late father was UNAM's rector from 1948 to 1953. Garrido lives by himself in the upper-middle-class Del Valle neighborhood, in a house with an enormous number of rooms and an aura of decrepit elegance. The place, which used to belong to his parents, is outfitted with chandeliers, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Spanish paintings, finely carved chairs from Paris, and antiques acquired in European capitals. Books are everywhere: Garrido's library exceeds fifty thousand volumes. An adjoining room contains the last six years of *La Jornada*, thousands of issues neatly stacked and organized. "The libraries in this country are terrible," he explains with a shrug.

"The Mexican Constitution of 1917 promulgated that education provided by the state will be free at all levels," Garrido says. "Since the 1980s, the Mexican government has embraced the World Bank's agenda regarding privatization. The imposition of fees at public universities is an integral part of that agenda. Banks, telecommunications, maritime ports—even airports—have already been privatized. The students at UNAM saw that higher education was next on the list, and they decided to resist." From his point of view, it's a worthy crusade. "These are young people with extremely limited resources. I have eighty students in my class at the law school, and the textbook costs twenty dollars. Only twenty students could afford to purchase it. This movement has shown courage and generosity from the beginning. Their demand for free public education was opposed by the entire political system—the government, the unions, the opposition parties, the mass media, the institutional left. Yet the students, at great personal risk, insisted on defending the *principle* of free tuition. All of them are exempt from the new fee structure. They are fighting for future generations, not for themselves.

"But fees are just one demand. This is also a dispute about the internal structure of the university. State spending for UNAM has been declining for years, yet the bureaucracy keeps expanding. There is simply no equivalent in American or European universities. It's a bureaucratic caste that controls all the schools and departments. It's not uncommon for a department chair to have three or four vehicles for his personal use, for the use of his wife and children. They have credit cards, too, and you see them eating in the finest restaurants in the south of the city. Meanwhile, there are virtually no funds for laboratories, libraries, scholarly journals. The CGH is demanding

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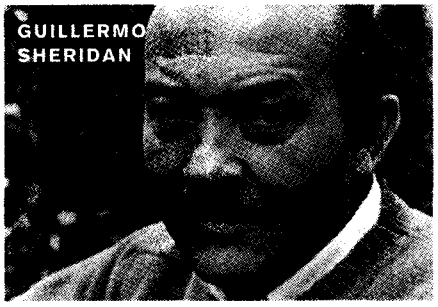
a fundamental reform of UNAM, especially with regard to financial transparency. This level of corruption is simply not acceptable in a public university."

Much of Garrido's ire is aimed at the PRD, which played an ambiguous, vacillating role in the strike. Week after week in *La Jornada,* Garrido sustains a relentless drumbeat against the center-left party, which, in his view, has become bloated, morally bankrupt, and fully integrated into the ruling elite. "Change in Mexico will only come from below," he wrote on March 24, "following the example of Chiapas and UNAM." He believes that the intellectuals, with their PRD connections, have become lethargic as well. "It's ironic that intellectuals who call themselves 'leftists' would sign a petition endorsing the police intervention in the university, overriding the path of dialogue," Garrido affirms. "It's one of the saddest chapters in Mexican intellectual history."


GUILLERMO SHERIDAN

ERNESTO LEHN

When pressed, Garrido does offer a gentle critique of the CGH. "Unfortunately, the movement committed errors," he says carefully. "Every social movement commits errors. There are no perfect movements. But the flaws of this movement pale in comparison to its many virtues." Garrido admits that his uncompromising stance on UNAM has cost him some friends on the left. "But," he says with a smile, "I've made new ones." After the occupation, he was one of two professors invited by the CGH to give seminars to students inside the penitentiary.

These days, he keeps up a frenetic schedule of speaking engagements. One afternoon in late March, Garrido was asked to speak at an UNAM high school in the Coyoacán suburb. Attired in a navy-blue sport jacket, gray shirt, and silk handkerchief, he addressed a packed auditorium of sixteen-year-olds, many of whom wore buttons that read LIBERTY FOR THE POLITICAL PRISONERS! They gave him a deafening round of applause.

IF GARRIDO IS the student movement's most articulate and energetic ally, Guillermo Sheridan is perhaps its most ferocious intellectual antagonist. Sheridan is the enfant terrible of Mexican letters, a kind of Hispanic H.L. Mencken. His essays and criticism appear in numerous publications, and for years he wrote a regular column about UNAM for Octavio Paz's magazine, *Vuelta,* which forged his reputation as an influential critic of the institution. He has taught literature at UNAM for twenty years—his specialty is modern and contemporary Mexican poetry—and he has written novels and short stories.

When the strike began, Sheridan tried to confront the logic of the student movement, arguing that students who could afford the new fees should pay them and help subsidize the education of those who could not. As the conflict deepened, his prose became more astringent. In September he declared that the strikers were "advancing toward their very own Finland Station, and the future of the university hangs in the balance." A month later Sheridan wrote: "The UNAM is no longer public; it's been privatized by a small Jacobin directorate.... It is not popular: It's been transformed into an aristocracy of indignation. It is not autonomous: It's been invaded by a handful of *villistas, marquistas, zapatistas, cheguevaristas, maoistas, rosaluxemburguistas....* In sum, it's not even a university but a political-military beachhead."

Sheridan is the president of the Octavio Paz Foundation, which is located on what is perhaps the most elegant cobblestoned street in Mexico City. Situated behind stone walls covered with ivy is a sixteen-room mansion, built in the seventeenth century, whose architecture reflects the Baroque style of the Spanish empire. The mansion—which is surrounded by statues, outbuildings, and gardens—was donated to the foundation by the Mexican government. When his Mexico City apartment caught fire, Octavio Paz, dying of cancer, spent his final months here; the original galleys of his book, *The Labyrinth of Solitude,* are currently on display in the foundation's small gallery.

Sheridan is a sardonic and intense man of fifty. Like many of his compatriots in the Western Hemisphere's most polluted city, he devours one cigarette after another. Books by his favorite writers—Paz, Mencken, Edmund Wilson, and Isaiah Berlin—line the shelves of his office. Like many people enmeshed in the strike, he exudes a certain weariness.

"It never made sense to me why a student of means—someone who, for instance, can afford two thousand dollars a year—shouldn't pay for his tuition at the university. On the campus, it is not uncommon to see very good cars, late-model cars, driven by students who don't pay a cent for their education. But the left in Mexico, as far as I can tell, is absolutely determined to preserve an ideological proposition that is rooted in Mexican nationalism and populism of the 1930s. It is the idea of a socialist state that will provide and will take care of everything. UNAM might be the last place where this kind of illusion can be sustained. But higher education is not for everyone. It is for those who earn it, those who deserve it."

"THE REVIVAL OF IRRATIONALITY THESE PAST TEN MONTHS IS AMAZING," SAYS SHERIDAN. "HAVE YOU SEEN THE PEOPLE WHO ARE CUTTING THEIR VEINS?"

Sheridan traces the roots of the present conflict to the early 1970s, the difficult years following the Tlatelolco massacre, when the Mexican Communist Party, in collaboration with student sympathizers, conquered the campus employees union. Throughout the current strike, that union, which has twenty-five thousand members, has been an essential bastion of support for the CGH. But, he says, other leftist groups have entered the fray, and the result is a dangerous amalgamation of ideological forces: "The fact that UNAM can be taken hostage by a group of ideologues contradicts not

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only the spirit of the university itself but the principles of democratic behavior we are trying to strengthen here in Mexico. These students are saying that only radical measures produce change, which is a very dangerous assertion in this country. We are seeing guerrilla tactics applied to the national university. The students put barbed wire around the campus. They set up barricades in the streets. They burst into classes, before and after the strike, to denounce professors. It's *Lord of the Flies.*"

Sheridan believes that, in the course of the strike, the CGH and its allies—including Subcomandante Marcos and some radical squatter organizations—deliberately harnessed the most superstitious and reactionary aspects of Mexican culture. "The revival of irrationality these past ten months is amazing," he notes. "Have you seen the people who are cutting their veins?" After the occupation, parents of the arrested students erected a tent city in front of the rector's office, and some of them staged fake crucifixions. "They cut themselves and collected the blood with a syringe. Then they wrote on the walls with it. It's a fanatical, superstitious impulse, and somehow Marcos and the left have tapped into it." All of this led Sheridan to sign the February 3 petition. "I don't regret it," he says. "There was no other way out. I have a right to teach my class."

And yet his future as a professor is uncertain. "I'm not going back to the university for at least six months," he says. "Two weeks ago, in the middle of March, I tried to go and teach my class. I didn't even make it to the classroom. Somebody recognized me and started shouting. A few of his *compañeros* came and said, 'Yeah, that's him! Are you the bastard who's criticizing us?' I lowered my head, turned around, and went back to my car." Sheridan sees no end to the conflict; indeed, he thinks it will gather momentum in the upcoming months as adjunct professors—along with tens of thousands of applicants who are turned away from UNAM every spring—join the protests.

Where does that leave him? "I have a small group of students this semester, and they will start coming here," Sheridan replies, puffing on his cigarette and nodding toward a table and chairs in the foundation's magnificent garden. "What can I do?" he says with a nervous chuckle. "I'm definitely a persona non grata."

LUIS VILLORO is hardly a persona non grata. As he approaches the age of eighty, his position in the intelligentsia is secure. Born in Barcelona, educated in Paris and Munich, he possesses sterling credentials: professor emeritus of philosophy at UNAM; former ambassador to UNESCO; author of many books and articles. Generally liberal in his politics, Villoro, like many intellectuals, was radicalized by the Zapatista uprising of 1994, and he eventually became an adviser to the insurgents in Chiapas. But his stance on the student strike was measured. When UNAM was occupied, Villoro wrote a pithy essay for *La Jornada* titled "Days of Mourning":

> This is a wake-up call to the young people who wish to transform the university and the country. It is indispensable to have ideals, but intransigence can lead to the destruction of those ideals. The CGH had many opportunities to end the conflict

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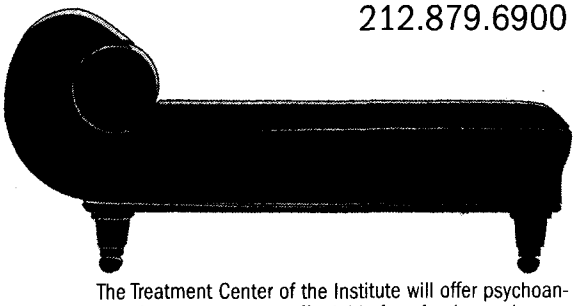

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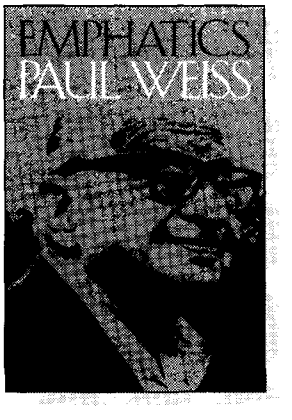

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VILLORO RECALLS THE ANGER OF THE STRIKERS: "STUDENTS ERECTED A CEMENT WALL—A CEMENT WALL!—INSIDE THE SCIENCE BUILDING TO PREVENT THE DIRECTOR FROM RETURNING TO HIS OFFICE."

> with dignity and honor; it rejected all of them. The lesson is hard, but it must be confronted: No matter how just its cause, a movement cannot impose its will on everyone else while excluding all possible allies....

Villoro himself was among the excluded allies. In late July, he and seven other professors emeriti released a proposal to end the crisis. Under their plan, the CGH would lift the strike in exchange for a series of university-wide roundtables whose recommendations concerning the "fundamental problems" of UNAM would eventually be implemented by the University Council. The proposal triggered weeks of intense debate in the press, in political circles, and within the student movement. President Ernesto Zedillo himself endorsed it as "generous and lucid." On August 10, four of the *eméritos,* including Villoro, debated the plan face-to-face with the CGH. It was an electrifying event: Two thousand people packed the Che Guevara Auditorium in the School of Philosophy and Literature, and, for six hours, the invective and chaos that normally characterize CGH meetings were absent. It was a gesture of respect for a group of professors—among them Marcos's old instructor, the Spanish Marxist Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez—whose integrity and political commitment were unimpeachable.

Yet the proposal was heavily criticized. Many delegates highlighted its ambiguity and lack of guarantees. These critics invoked the 1996 peace accords between the government and the Zapatistas, which the regime signed but failed to implement, choosing low-intensity warfare instead. "We should learn from that example. Why surrender now?" one student asked, pointedly declaring that "Luis Villoro should know that, since he was an adviser to the Zapatistas." In a scorching communiqué published in *La Jornada,* Marcos unleashed the same argument: "Why do the *eméritos* think the rector and the government will live up to their word, despite what they sign or promise?" Villoro dispatched a smoldering letter to *La Jornada* defending his proposal and affirming his commitment to "our common cause: the defense of the rights of the indigenous peoples." In the end, the CGH rejected the proposal.

Tall, handsome, with a shock of white hair, Villoro lives in a stylish house in the tony suburb of San Angel. A maid serves coffee. "These young people have no confidence in the system," he observes. "They treat it with scorn and hostility. It is a

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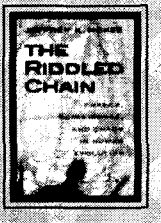

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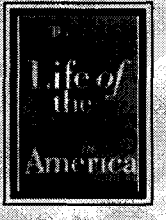

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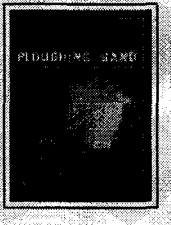

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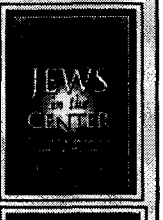

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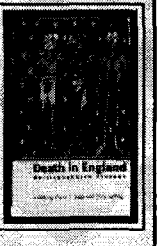

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deeply frustrated generation. They grew up in a society filled with corruption, a society where politicians murder each other, a society where there is no real democracy, where there are no substantial public discussions about the problems that plague us. Hope has been eliminated from their lives. The majority of the students belong to the lower-middle class, a class that has been shattered, a class where your chances of rising are very limited.

"I grew up in the 1940s and 1950s, in the middle of the 'boom,' the 'takeoff,' the 'Mexican miracle.' There was a sense, back then, that the problems of the country were slowly being resolved. Beginning in the late 1970s, however, everything fell apart. It's been a nonstop economic crisis since then. We're still living through it. What was lost was confidence in the system, confidence in institutions. This strike resembles a surrealist film. Students erected a cement wall—a cement wall!—inside the science building to prevent the director from returning to his office. These young people are filled with anger and rage. The university becomes the arena where they unleash that rage, but it stems from a deep crisis in Mexico's social, political, and economic system."

UNAM's political structure is a lightning rod for their disaffection. Villoro refers to the "frightful bureaucracy," the administrators who cling to their free meals, travel budgets, and chauffeurs, and the "vertical style" of decision making that prevails throughout the institution but especially in the University Council. The event that detonated the strike—the March 15, 1999, vote on the "Barnés plan"—is, he says, "a good example of this. No one was consulted—not the students, not the professors—no one. It's a very Mexican tradition."

The strike has put Villoro in a pensive mood. "I believe the movement began as a revolt against an unjust, corrupt system by young people who wanted to restore hope and justice to this country. They succeeded in creating an awareness, throughout Mexico, about the urgent need for reform in the university. The rector, sooner or later, will have to confront their demands regarding the automatic pass and a congress. This is a great victory for the students! Unfortunately, at the same time, the movement became sectarian and intransigent and embraced tactics that contradicted its stated ideals."

Villoro will not discuss his clash with Subcomandante Marcos. Six months later, those wounds are still fresh, and he claims not even to possess a copy of their published exchange, which he refers to as "a small matter best forgotten." The strike has left him peevish and melancholy. While his proposal was being debated by the CGH, a number of banners on the campus, where he has labored for four decades, branded him a traitor. "But I haven't given up," he says quietly. "A great many students in the movement, young people of extraordinary character and intelligence, refused to embrace the violent, intransigent tactics of the *ultras*. They are the seeds of change and hope not only for the university but for Mexico."

Scott Sherman's work has appeared in *The Nation, The New York Observer,* and other publications. His article "The Radosh File" appeared in the October 1999 *LF*.

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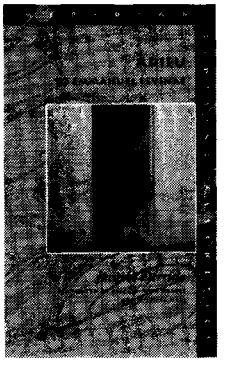

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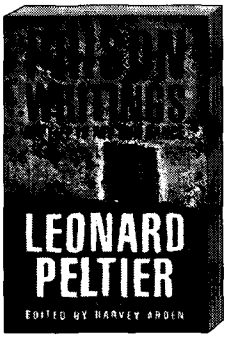

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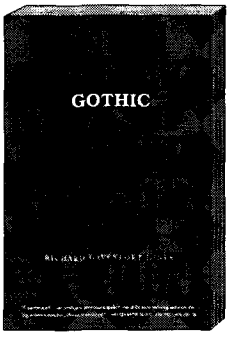

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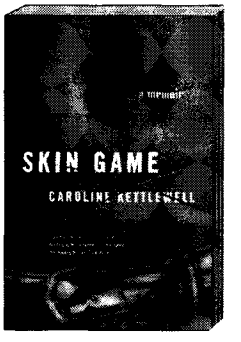

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VOICES

ONE MORE PARADIGM SHIFT, AND YOU'LL BE ABLE TO TELL

ACCORDING TO MANY COMPUTER-industry observers, we're on the brink of the voice-recognition revolution. In mid-1997, Dragon Software released NaturallySpeaking, the first desktop program that can recognize continuous speech rather than just isolated words. IBM, Philips, and emerging language-software giant Lernout & Hauspie have since shipped rival packages. And in March, a coalition of internet companies released Voice XML, an open standard for making websites voice-accessible. "Speech [recognition] is not just the future of Windows," says Bill Gates, "but the future of computing itself." Five years from now, a computer without ears will seem as antiquated as one without a mouse.

But although today's speech-recognition systems perform at levels that would have seemed dazzling twenty years ago, they are still inferior to humans in almost every way. They have trouble deciphering mumbles, stutters, and accents. They get flummoxed in noisy environments or when several people are speaking at once. Humans solve these problems more or less effortlessly, but if the last half century of research is any guide, knowing how it works in the natural world won't help the machines. As Reinhard Karger, a project manager at Germany's Verbmobil speech-translation project puts it, "An airplane does not flap its wings."

To overcome these performance barriers—to justify the gleam in Bill Gates's eye—computer speech recognition needs a paradigm shift. In fact, it was just such a paradigm shift, thirty years ago, that made today's systems possible.

THE SUCCESS of modern speech recognition isn't due to any one person, but it just might be due to two: Jim and Janet Baker. The Bakers met as graduate students at New York's Rockefeller University in 1970. Janet was a biophysicist studying the nervous system. Jim was getting his Ph.D. in mathematics. He became interested in speech because Janet was working on it.

The dominant model of speech interpretation at that time was template matching. To get a template, researchers would record test subjects pronouncing a word and then do a frequency analysis. The frequencies might be higher when pronounced by a child and lower when pronounced by a linebacker, but the overall shape of both frequency progressions would be similar. When several such progressions were combined, the result was a sausage-shaped zone of the possible frequencies for a given word.

An automatic speech recognizer might have a vocabulary of several hundred such word templates. When a user spoke a word into the computer's microphone, the computer would do a frequency analysis and compare it with all the templates in its memory. After picking the closest-matching template, the computer would spell out the corresponding word on the screen.

There were a number of problems with the template-matching model. First, it was inflexible with regard to speed of pronunciation. Humans have no trouble recognizing that "goal" is the same word as "gooooooaaaal!" But to the template-matching computer, they look completely different; one is ten times longer than the other. To resolve this problem, scientists came up with something called dynamic time warping. This is a set of functions that the computer can use to shrink or stretch the utterance until it conforms to one of the templates it knows. Unfortunately, dynamic time warping is tricky. For example, in "gooooooaaaal!" the letter *g* doesn't stretch at all. The computer has to know to warp different sounds in different ways.

Second, while template matching is well suited to recognizing discrete words, it's clumsy with the smaller building blocks of speech, known as phonemes. Phonemes are the basic sounds in a language—*sh, ee, mm,* and so on. English has about fifty of them. In principle, recognizing phonemes should be more efficient than recognizing entire words because the computer only has to store fifty-odd templates, rather than thousands. But phonemes are constantly getting pressed up against each other in speech. The beginnings and ends of a phoneme get twisted by the phonemes on either side of it, so that the *o* in "goal" looks very different from the *o* in "yoga." It's also hard for a computer to tell where one phoneme ends and the next begins. When you give a computer continuous speech rather than single words, the problem is compounded. "Did you"

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CARRY

YOUR COMPUTER EVERYTHING. BY MATTHEW STEINGLASS

becomes "didja"; "get Ted" becomes "ge' Ted." All of this leads to the speech-recognition scientist's nemesis: ambiguity.

This is where mathematician Jim Baker came in. As an undergraduate, Baker had worked on stochastic modeling, a way of using probability and statistics to handle ambiguous information. Baker had a hunch that stochastic modeling, which emerged in the late 1960s, would prove useful in speech recognition, and the 1975 paper in which he set forth the idea has become a classic. Every speech-recognition application on the market today uses stochastic modeling—more specifically, a set of techniques known as hidden Markov models, or HMMs.

The equations behind HMMs are extremely difficult, but the overall concept is at least comprehensible to the layman. Let's say you have a random, or stochastic, process, such as the weather. Suppose you know the probability that any given state in this system will be followed by any other state. For example, there might be a 40 percent chance that a sunny day will be followed by another sunny day, a 20 percent chance that it will be followed by an overcast day, and so forth. (This is called a Markov process—each state is determined probabilistically by the state immediately before it.) Let's say you also know the probability that each state will be associated with rainfall. There might be a 20 percent chance that an overcast day will yield an inch of rain but only a 1 percent chance that a sunny day will.

Now, let's suppose you are given a series of precipitation reports. You don't know whether it was sunny or overcast on these days; you only know how much rainfall there was. What sequence of sunny or overcast days is most likely to have produced this sequence of precipitation? This is a hidden Markov model. It's "hidden" because you have no direct knowledge of the underlying Markov process—the sequence of sunny or overcast days.

By the early 1970s, mathematicians had developed a number of techniques for handling this sort of problem. Baker's insight was to apply them to speech recognition. He was looking for a hidden sequence of phonemes instead of a hidden sequence of sunny or cloudy days, and he was working with sound frequencies rather than precipitation reports. But the underlying mathematical problem was the same. A computer could use HMM equations to match the speaker's frequencies to the phonemes she was most likely to have been pronouncing.

The Bakers did more than hypothesize that HMMs might work; they set out to prove it. In 1972, the newly married couple transferred to Carnegie Mellon, where the government's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency sponsored their work. The goal was to design a system with a thousand-word vocabulary and 90 percent accuracy, and they achieved it with an HMM-based system they named DRAGON. By 1976, a version of DRAGON was outperforming the best of the template-matching models. In 1982, after a number of frustrating years at IBM and at Verbex, an Exxon subsidiary, the Bakers went into business on their own, founding Dragon Systems, Inc. Today, Dragon's NaturallySpeaking is the No. 1 voice-recognition program on the U.S. market.

TWENTY-FIVE years after DRAGON, HMM-based speech recognition is a billion-dollar industry. Continuous-speech voice-recognition systems, such as dictation programs, can achieve accuracy rates of up to 98 percent when trained to the voice of a single user. But "speaker-independent" systems rarely go much higher than 80 percent. HMMs are statistical tools, and the more variables that enter the system—differences in accent, sex, and age of speakers—the more ambiguous the results.

The most obvious way of minimizing this uncertainty is to feed the programs more and better data. But compiling vast acoustical databases is incredibly resource-intensive, and it favors big companies. In fact, these economies of scale recently spelled the end of Dragon Systems as an independent company. In March, it was acquired by Lernout & Hauspie.

Another way of minimizing ambiguity is by enlisting the aid of a "language model," which describes what sort of words are likely to follow other words. Language models tend to be partly grammatical (eliminating impossible combinations like "the

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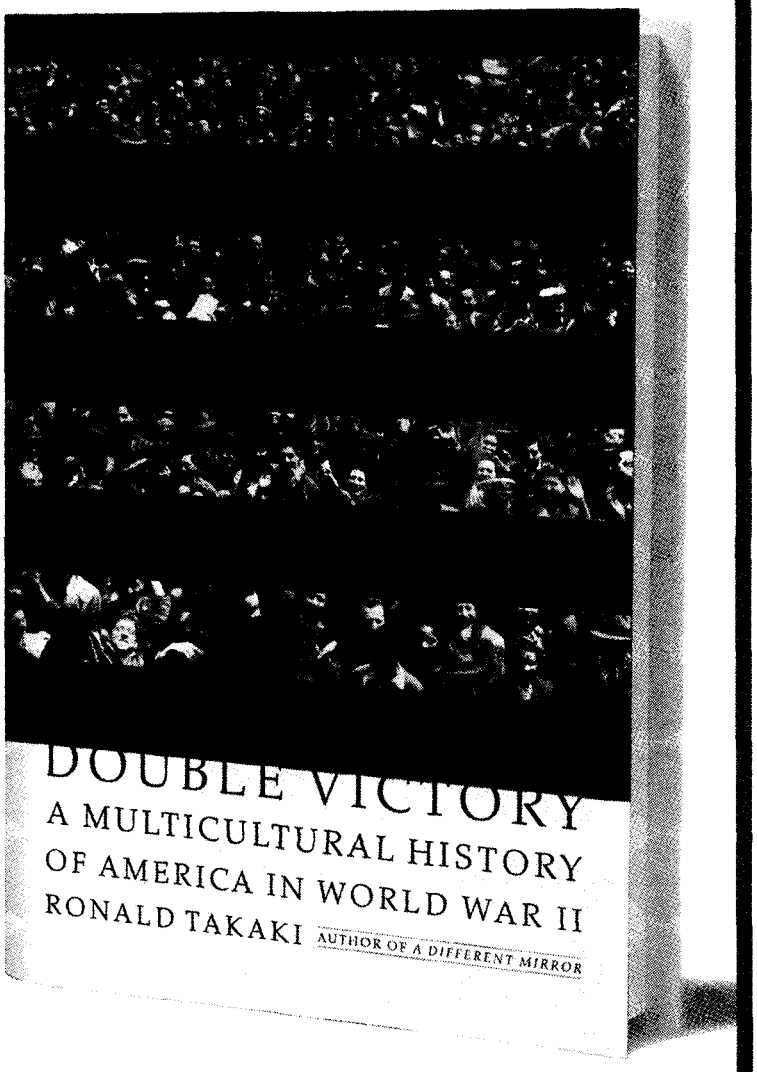

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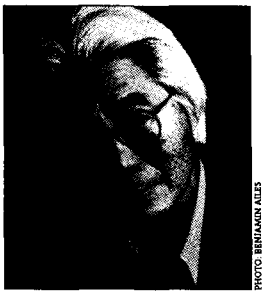

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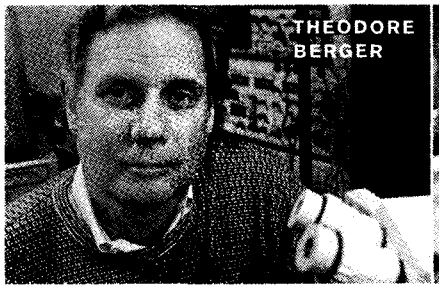

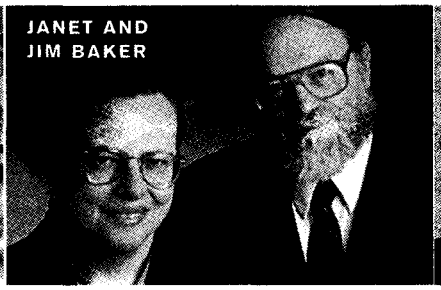

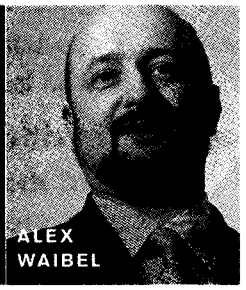

BERGER'S NEURAL NET CAN RECOGNIZE SPOKEN WORDS THROUGH WALLS OF WHITE NOISE NO HUMAN EAR CAN PENETRATE.

the") and partly statistical (preferring common phrases over unlikely ones).

Alex Waibel is famous for having attacked the problem of voice recognition from yet another angle. In the late 1980s, the Carnegie Mellon researcher helped pioneer what then seemed to be the paradigm shift everyone was looking for: the artificial neural network. In an artificial neural network, or neural net, the "neurons" are pieces of software able to perform simple calculations. They are connected to each other, and each connection is assigned a certain weight. In a speech-recognition neural net, sound frequencies go in at one end, and numbers denoting phonemes come out the other side.

Neural nets are programmed by a trial-and-error training process. When a net gets an answer wrong, it changes the weights of the connections between its neurons and tries again. When it gets an answer right, it reinforces the weights it has. In 1986, Waibel trained a neural net to recognize the phonemes *b*, *d*, and *g*. It achieved 98.5 percent accuracy—better than contemporary HMM systems.

But neural nets as conceived in the 1980s have a problem: They aren't very good at handling time. They get confused if the phoneme comes in a little bit earlier or later than usual, and they need to have their data nicely segmented for them in advance. As a result, they aren't practical for continuous-speech recognition. Many systems today use them, but only as part of a hybrid approach, where neural nets function as front ends or back ends for specific tasks.

Last October, however, neural nets were back in the speech-recognition news. University of Southern California neurobiologist Theodore Berger announced that he and a colleague had developed a neural net that broke one of the field's most significant barriers. Under noisy conditions, where most systems perform badly, Berger's net could actually outperform people. It could recognize spoken words through walls of white noise so thick that no human could understand what had been said.

Berger didn't set out to build a speech-recognition system. He set out to build a neural net that more closely modeled the behavior of neurons in the brain. In real neurons, Berger explains, what matters is how fast and how often neurons fire, not simply whether they fire or not. Thus Berger built a neural net that transferred information by pulsing at varying frequencies. Then he looked for problems to turn it loose on. "We finally decided to try speech recognition because it's such a hard problem," says Berger. "We figured, if it could do speech, it could do anything."

Although Berger's achievement sounds remarkable, the response in the speech-recognition community has been muted to skeptical. Part of the reason is its limited scale; Berger's system has a vocabulary of just a dozen or so words. It operates at the level of words rather than phonemes, so it is unable to make anything of a word it hasn't seen before. Nor can it parse continuous speech.

And then there's the problem of flapping airplane wings. Speech researchers have learned to distrust "humanlike" approaches. As Hans Uszkoreit of Germany's DFKI research institute puts it, "It would be very surprising if this were a real breakthrough. These things don't happen that often in engineering fields."

NEVERTHELESS, Uszkoreit is among those who think the field is due for another breakthrough. "Current technology, with hidden-Markov-model-based speech recognition, is just not improving that fast," he says. "So we're all expecting new progress to come from some other kind of development."

Uszkoreit himself holds out hope for a technique called feature-based recognition. If today's HMM-based systems search for the sequence of phonemes "hidden" beneath sound waves, then tomorrow's feature-based systems will try to penetrate to an even deeper layer—to the features from which phonemes are composed. "For example, *p* and *b* have one feature in common—they're bilabials, you use both lips to produce them," Uszkoreit explains. "But they differ in another feature—one is voiced, the other unvoiced." Uszkoreit hopes that computers might be able to zero in on the differences in acoustic profile that separate, say, voiced phonemes from unvoiced ones. This, he hypothesizes, must be how humans do it. "It may even be that we have a special part of our own neural net which is trained to certain features," he says.

But wait a minute. It sounds suspiciously as if Uszkoreit wants his machines to imitate humans....

"Did you know that babies can distinguish phonemes which occur only in foreign languages?" Uszkoreit asks. "In the beginning, you're open to all feature differences. Then when you adapt your speech perception to your own language's sound system, you lose this ability."

There is indeed a great temptation to find approaches that seem closer to how humans do it. And sometimes even the most hardened speech-recognition scientist is tempted to think like a human being rather than a machine.

Matthew Steinglass is a freelance writer living in Amsterdam. His article "International Man of Mystery" appeared in the April 1998 issue of *Lingua Franca*.

FROM LEFT: USC/IRENE FINK; LERNOUT & HAUSPIE; DRAGON SYSTEMS; CARNEGIE MELLON

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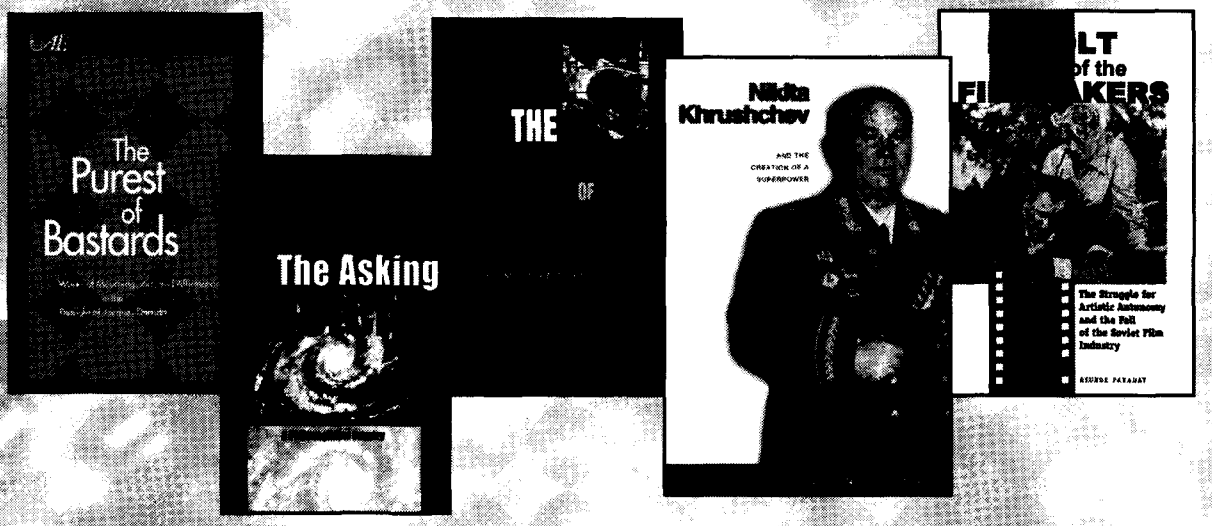

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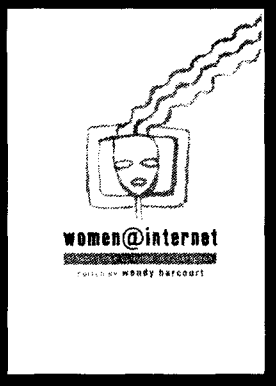

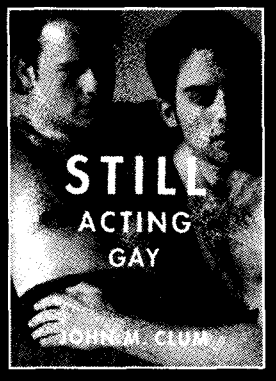

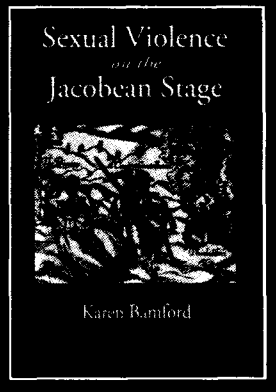

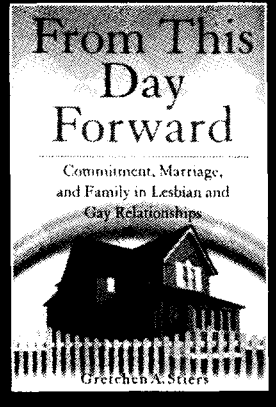

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DEATH OF AN ALTRUIST

WAS THE MAN WHO FOUND THE SELFLESS GENE TOO GOOD FOR THIS WORLD?

BY **JAMES SCHWARTZ**

IN A RUTHLESS, DARWINIAN WORLD, HUMAN HEARTLESSNESS IS EASY to explain. After all, natural selection eliminates the weak and rewards the strong. Unselfish behavior, on the other hand, is baffling. Compassion, kindness, and loyalty ought to be weeded out almost as soon as they arise.

To explain the evolution of altruism, Charles Darwin suggested that natural selection could act on groups as well as individuals—an idea known as group selection. Within a tribe, it could hardly be doubted that "selfish and treacherous parents" would have the most children, he wrote in his 1871 classic, *The Descent of Man*. On the other hand, he explained, tribes including many members "ready to give aid to each other and sacrifice themselves for the common good would be victorious over other tribes."

But Darwin never fully developed his ideas about group selection, and his heirs continue to argue over it. The late William D. Hamilton, widely regarded as the most important evolutionary thinker since Darwin, proposed an enormously influential alternative to group selection called the theory of nepotistic altruism. This is the idea that all apparently altruistic behavior is directed exclusively toward genetic relatives. True selflessness, in Hamilton's opinion, almost never happened. Among human beings, the

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two examples that came most readily to Hamilton's mind were Mother Teresa and his friend the brilliant, iconoclastic American scientist George Price.

Despite his remarkable scientific achievements and the intense drama of his personal life, George Price has remained a relatively obscure figure in the history of science. And yet he played a key role in shaping the conceptual basis of sociobiology and its offshoot, evolutionary psychology. He was the first to apply the principles of game theory to the analysis of animal conflicts, and he discovered an elegant formula to describe evolutionary change that both simplified and improved Hamilton's theory of nepotistic altruism. Furthermore, Price's formula provides a rigorous mathematical framework in which to understand group selection.

In his last years, even Price himself lost interest in securing recognition for his scientific achievement. Altruism, which had begun as an intellectual problem, became an all-consuming personal concern. In the midst of an extraordinary burst of scientific creativity in the summer of 1970, Price abruptly converted from militant atheist to fundamentalist Christian. After his conversion, he combined his work in genetics with a passionate interest in biblical exegesis. Later, he decided that the mission of a true Christian was to help his fellow man, and he spent increasing amounts of time aiding homeless alcoholics and the elderly in his adopted city of London. As he ministered to others, his own life disintegrated into chaos. He died in 1975.

In the years before his own untimely death this past spring, William Hamilton often wrote and spoke about Price in an effort to draw attention to his old friend's ideas. Earlier this year, Hamilton shared with me his lengthy correspondence with Price. With the help of these unpublished letters and Hamilton's recollections, as well as additional aid from Price's two daughters and many friends and colleagues, I have tried to piece together the tumultuous story of this extraordinary man.

A PHYSICAL chemist and a journalist before he studied genetics, George Price took a circuitous path to evolutionary biology. Born in 1922, he was only four years old when his father died. His mother, a former opera singer and actress, struggled to keep the family's lighting company afloat through the Depression, and it was difficult for her to support George and his older brother, Edison. After attending public school in New York City, George went to the University of Chicago, where he earned a Ph.D. in chemistry, and later worked on the Manhattan Project. In 1947, he married Julia Madigan, and they had two daughters. Three years later, the family moved to Minneapolis, where Price worked as a medical researcher at the University of Minnesota. Because George was a fire-spitting atheist and Julia a devout Christian, their relationship was contentious from the beginning. After eight years, the marriage ended in acrimony.

> PRICE'S EQUATION SO IMPRESSED THE SCIENTISTS AT GALTON LABS THAT AN HOUR AND A HALF AFTER MEETING HIM, THEY GAVE HIM AN OFFICE AND A SET OF KEYS.

In 1955, the year of his divorce, Price published his first magazine piece, a long article in *Science* in which he questioned the quality of the evidence used to demonstrate ESP. It was the first of several highly visible, and often farsighted, forays into journalism. The following year Price published "How to Speed Up Invention" in *Fortune* magazine. In the age of punched cards and Teletypes, the article described in detail a hypothetical "design machine," which would feature a graphic display, a cursorlike light pen, and a mouselike device to rotate, shrink, and enlarge shapes.

In 1957, Price sent Senator Hubert Humphrey an early draft of an essay he was writing for *Life* titled "Arguing the Case for Being Panicky." The article warned that a decline in U.S. military strength could lead to catastrophe, and it so impressed Humphrey that the two men went on to exchange dozens of letters. Price told Humphrey about several novel foreign policy ideas he had derived from game theory. He suggested, for example, that the United States offer to buy every Russian citizen two pairs of high-quality shoes (at a cost of $2 billion) in exchange for the liberation of Hungary. The same year, Price began to write a book on the Soviet threat for Doubleday, which he abandoned in 1959 when he concluded that the Soviet position on disarmament was more commendable than the U.S. position. He returned to scientific research by accepting a post at IBM, where he worked on the development of mainframe computers and the mathematical modeling of free markets.

But Price's career soon took a dramatic turn. In 1966, he was treated for thyroid cancer. Price believed that the doctor, an old friend of his from Chicago, badly mishandled the operation. The surgery, added to earlier nerve damage caused by polio, left Price's shoulder partially paralyzed. The misfortune earned Price a generous insurance settlement, and he decided to use the money to finance one final career shift.

IN NOVEMBER 1967, Price sailed on the *Queen Elizabeth,* pleased to be the sole occupant of a stateroom meant for two. In England, bankrolled by his insurance settlement, he rented a large flat in an affluent section of London near Oxford Circus. In his first letter to his grown daughters, he reports humorously about his exploration of the city: "Dear Babies, I have seen quite a lot of London so far, including the British Museum library, the Museum of Natural History library, the University of London library, the University College library, the Wellcome Historical Medical library, and Science and Technology library. Soon I hope to visit the Royal College of Surgeons library and Royal Zoological Society library."

Among the articles Price read in his library visits was William D. Hamilton's now-classic study "The Genetical Evolution of Social Behavior." A watershed in the

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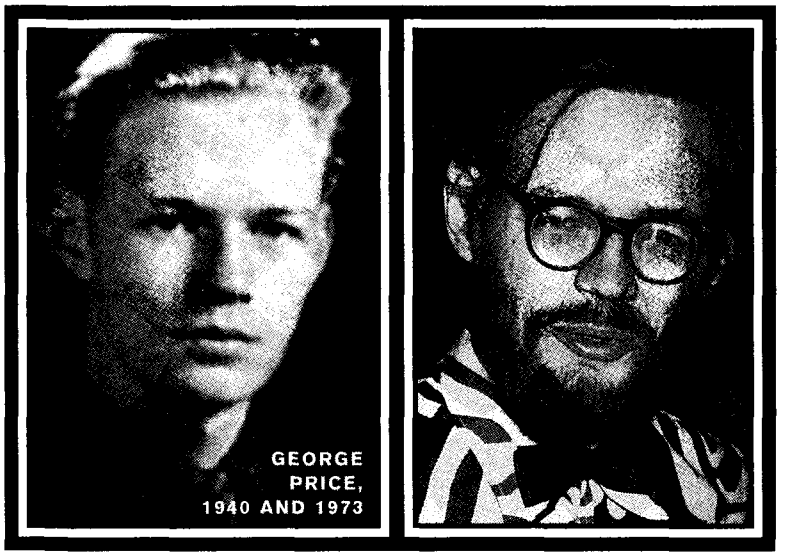
history of evolutionary biology, it would be Price's point of entry into the field.

According to traditional Darwinism, natural selection is the survival of the fittest—with "the fittest" defined as those organisms who leave the most descendants. It was easy for Darwin to account for the evolution of traits that directly benefit individuals, such as good eyesight. However, it was harder to explain the evolution of behavior that benefits fellow organisms while lowering an individual's own fitness. In the early 1960s, the most common explanation was the theory of group selection. It was believed that natural selection acted on two levels, favoring better adapted individuals (who left more progeny), on the one hand, and better adapted groups, on the other. A selfish individual would tend to leave more offspring than an altruist, but a group that contained many altruists would tend to grow faster than a group that didn't.

Hamilton rejected this notion altogether. He insisted that the natural selection of individuals was responsible for all significant evolutionary adaptations, including self-sacrificing behavior. The problem, as Hamilton saw it, was that evolutionary biologists had been defining fitness too narrowly. What mattered was not merely the number of offspring an individual had but his "inclusive fitness." In addition to an individual's own progeny, you had to consider the progeny of his relatives, fractionally weighted according to how closely they were related. Hamilton's argument depended on the "gene's eye" point of view—the idea that it was the survival of particular genes, rather than the survival of the individuals who carried them, that was crucial. This was the argument that Richard Dawkins would develop with dazzling lucidity in his 1976 book, *The Selfish Gene.*

In March 1968, Price wrote Hamilton requesting a reprint of the paper. "The mathematics in it is a bit formidable to absorb in library reading," he explained. Price's initial observations were nonetheless so perceptive that Hamilton was inspired to write two dense, handwritten pages in return. Hamilton described his recent work and disappointed Price with the news that he would be unavailable for further discussion: He was about to depart for a nine-month research trip in Brazil.

Left to his own devices, Price set out to find a simpler, more direct way of achieving Hamilton's results. That summer, he wrote Hamilton in Brazil to report that he had found "a more transparent (though less rigorous) derivation and formulation of the main result of your...paper." This was an understatement. He hadn't merely simplified Hamilton's math. He had reconceptualized the mathematics of how genes flourish or fade under natural selection, and he had done it with a startlingly simple equation. The equation was so pared down that it could apply to any form of selection, "from selecting a book or a radio station to genetic selection," as Price later put it in a letter to a friend.



GEORGE PRICE, 1940 AND 1973

FROM LEFT: COURTESY HARVARD UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES; COURTESY KATHLEEN PRICE

AT THE HEART of Price's equation is the mathematical concept of covariance—a statistical measure of the relationship between any two sets of data. Take, for example, the rainfall and temperature in a given place over thirty days. If rainfall is independent of temperature, then the covariance of rainfall and temperature will be close to zero. If days with more than average rain also tend to have higher-than-average temperatures, then the covariance will be positive. But if days with more rain than usual tend to have lower temperatures than usual, then the covariance will be negative.

How can a covariance measure natural selection? Price's equation describes the change in a gene's frequency from one generation to the next. Specifically, it relates that change to the covariance between an individual's possession of the gene and the number of children he or she has. If having the gene leads to having more offspring, the frequency of the gene will increase in the next generation.

It sounds so straightforward as to be almost tautological. But Price's mathematics was strikingly original. Furthermore, in the process of inventing a new algebra of natural selection, Price also devised a more sophisticated and accurate way of understanding relatedness. In his own work, Hamilton had assumed a population that was infinitely large. But Price saw that calculations of relatedness turn out differently in a small population of closely related individuals. In a finite population, individual A can be *negatively* related to individual B, in the sense of sharing fewer genes with B than with the members of the group on average. Negative relatedness changed the predictions of Hamilton's theory in subtle but significant ways. First, it made clear that if you have a gene that benefits your group, that gene will survive only if it is of more benefit to your close relatives than to your distant ones. More disturbingly, it implied that it could be adaptive for animals to harm themselves in order to harm others more. Price called this "spiteful behavior": It might pay for an animal to take the life of a "negatively related" neighbor even at some cost to itself.

Price's approach bore no relation to previous work. At first, even Price was convinced that his equation was too simple to be new, so he decided to check it with an expert at the Galton Laboratory at University College, London, the famous department of human genetics named in honor of Darwin's cousin Sir Francis Galton. When he visited the Galton Labs in June 1968, Price asked to speak with a mathematical geneticist and was taken to Cedric Smith, a respected biostatisti-

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cian. "Smith said it was very interesting, very pretty, and he had never seen anything like it before," Price later wrote to his mother. After quizzing him about his work, Smith brought Price to the department chairman. Eighty minutes later, Price had an honorary appointment, an office, and keys. He left walking on air.

WITH A TITLE, an office, and the support of certified experts, Price set off with new confidence to write up his results. He believed that university backing would help him get funding and make it easier to publish his work. But outside of work, it was a difficult period for Price. His shoulder was troubling him again, and he was anxious over money, since he had spent most of his insurance settlement. To top it off, his mother had fallen seriously ill.

In March 1969, his mother's health took a precipitous downturn, and he flew to New York to see her once more before she died. During his visit, he met Richard Lewontin, a young and highly regarded population geneticist. If anyone was in a position to understand Price's new selection mathematics, it was Lewontin, the most mathematical of the young geneticists. But the meeting did not go well; and Price blamed himself for failing to convey his new approach. After he returned to England in early May, however, things started to look up. He learned that he had become a grandfather, and in July he received a grant from Great Britain's Science Research Council.

Hamilton meanwhile had returned from Brazil, and in late July 1969, Price contacted him again. Nearly a year had elapsed since their last communication. In his letter, Price gently explained that Hamilton's formulation of nepotistic altruism did not work quite the way Hamilton thought it did. He generously offered to spare Hamilton the awkwardness of being corrected publicly. "I did want—in view of your friendly correspondence, because I respected your work, and because everyone makes a mistake now and then—to publish in a way that would not embarrass you," Price wrote. He left a telephone number and the times he could be reached.

In his 1996 book, *Narrow Roads of Gene Land,* Hamilton recalled his first telephone conversation with Price. "His voice was squeaky and condescending, rather guarded, on the phone," Hamilton wrote. In the conversation, Price described his covariance equations as "surprising for me too—quite a miracle." Price also asked if Hamilton had noticed that the equation could describe group selection as well as individual selection. Hamilton was skeptical. After all, it was through his rejection of group selection that he had arrived at the theory of nepotistic altruism in the first place.

But Price would eventually cause Hamilton to rethink his position. To understand why, we have to back up for a moment. Price's equation was in fact slightly more complex than the rendition of it above. In order to assess the fortunes of a particular gene, it's not enough to know whether having that gene correlates with having more children. It's also important to know how likely it is that your children will actually inherit that gene. And so there was a second term in Price's equation, assessing the likelihood of a particular gene's transmission. In most cases, children inherit a parent's genes at random—that is, the gene does not affect the viability of the sperm or egg—and the second term can be safely ignored.

But it is thanks to this second term that Price's equation sheds such powerful light on group selection. As Price hinted to Hamilton on the phone, it is possible to redefine the two terms in his equation by shifting them one notch up the population structure. Instead of applying to *individuals and their sperm or eggs,* the equation would apply to *groups and the individuals they contain.* The forces of selection acting at both the group and the individual level appear side by side in the revamped formula, making it possible to compare their relative strengths. A century after Darwin first wrote about group selection, Price's equation spelled out the precise conditions under which the interests of the group could trump the interests of the individual.

As it happened, one of the first well-documented examples of group selection had recently been reported. In Australia, scientists had introduced a disease virus in an attempt to control the native rabbit population. Although the virus was at first an extremely effective rabbit killer, over time it became considerably less virulent. Within any given rabbit, viruses that multiplied faster had the advantage over viruses that multiplied more slowly. In other words, on the individual level—in this case, the

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"I AM ENCHANTED WITH THE FORMULA DERIVED IN YOUR MANUSCRIPT," HAMILTON WROTE PRICE. A MONTH LATER, HE HAD BEGUN TO RETHINK GROUP SELECTION.

virus level—natural selection favored faster-multiplying (therefore more lethal) viruses. But when a rabbit died, the viruses inside died with it. (The virus was spread by mosquito, and mosquitoes do not bite dead rabbits.) Thus the faster a group of viruses multiplied, the more likely it was that their rabbit host would die before the virus could be transmitted to another rabbit. At the group level—at the level of the rabbit host—natural selection favored less lethal, slower-multiplying viruses. Price's equation could explain this evolution of an "altruistic" virus—a virus that multiplied less greedily so that its rabbit host could live longer.

Despite the strain in their first conversation, Hamilton quickly grasped the significance of Price's covariance equation and soon found himself won over. "I am enchanted with the formula derived in your manuscript," he wrote to Price in

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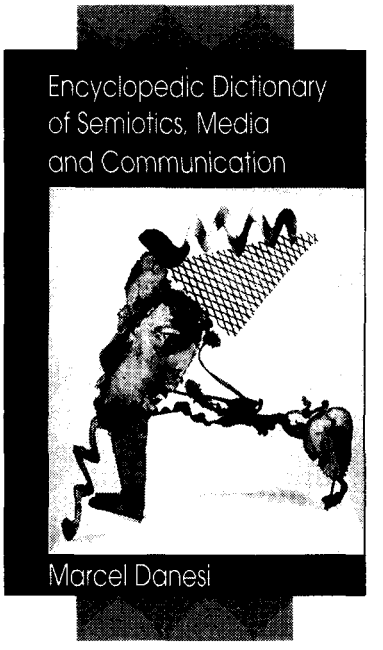

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December 1969. A month later he'd begun to rethink the issue of group selection. "In its general form, I can see how one might use your formula to investigate 'group selection,'" he wrote.

Although Price's equation was strikingly original, its publication, which would be Price's first in his new field, was by no means assured. Hamilton, who had felt isolated and unappreciated while working out his theory of nepotistic altruism, was anxious to help his friend avoid a similar fate. Together they devised a clever strategy to break into *Nature*, one of the premier science journals. Price would submit his paper on the mathematics of natural selection first. One week later, Hamilton would submit a paper that depended on Price's formula to re-derive his theory of inclusive fitness.

It came as no surprise when Price's paper was returned immediately. The editors had not seen fit to send it out for review. No less surprising, the paper by Hamilton, a well-established name, was accepted without delay. According to plan, Hamilton wrote *Nature* to withdraw his paper. He explained that he had made use of a "powerful new method," and he could not in good conscience publish his results until the method he used was published. The plan went off without a hitch; *Nature* promptly reconsidered. Price's "Selection and Covariance" was received on November 12, 1969, and published on August 1, 1970. Befitting its entirely original approach, the paper appeared without citations.

EARLY IN THE summer of 1970, at the age of forty-seven, Price underwent a sudden religious conversion. "On June 7th I gave in and admitted that God existed," he explained to friends. He viewed his conversion as a logical necessity, the result of a series of coincidences that had befallen him. After calculating the odds of their occurrence and finding them to be "astronomically low," he was convinced that there had been supernatural manipulation. One week later, he attended his first service at All Souls at Langham, a particularly evangelical branch of the Church of England, located around the corner from his apartment.

Over the course of the next year, Price's scientific work was accompanied by a new passion—biblical exegesis. Adopting a highly literal approach to the Bible, Price set out to reconcile discrepancies among the four Gospels. Nearly a year after his conversion, he completed a fifty-page article, "The Twelve Days of Easter," which proposed to replace the traditional eight-day Holy Week with a new chronology. He believed he had resolved several of the long-standing puzzles of biblical scholarship.

He sent the article to Hamilton, who was impressed by Price's reconstruction of the events of Easter week and encouraged him to publish it. But he did not accept Price's arguments for the existence of God, nor did he convert, as Price had hoped he would. In a letter, Hamilton likened his resistance to Christianity to "the Irishman who was asked whether he liked oysters and he replied, no, he didn't like oysters and he was glad he didn't like them because if he did he'd be eating them all the time when he hated the damned things."

Hamilton also attempted a more serious response to Price's new thinking about

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AFTER HIS RELIGIOUS CONVERSION, PRICE BEGAN CARING FOR THE HOMELESS AND REVISING THE CHRONOLOGY OF HOLY WEEK.

Christianity, prophecy, and free will. "Why should we respect Moses if he was just a puppet carrying out maneuvers to foreshadow the crucifixion, and why respect Jesus for following a canon that he was bound to follow anyway? A plot so elaborate would make life meaningless if one believed in it—and ugly too."

Price waited four months before replying. "The question is not whether you like it but whether it is true," he wrote. "What difference does it make whether you approve of it or not? Do you think that is something that I wanted to believe in?"

MEANWHILE, Price's second major breakthrough in evolutionary biology was at last about to see the light of day. Back in 1968, the same summer he happened upon his covariance equation, Price had become intrigued by the fact that male animals of the same species rarely fight to the death. In July of that year, anxious that his windfall insurance payment was running out, Price had worked night and day to complete an article setting forth a new idea, namely, that game theory might help evolutionary biologists understand animal conflict. At the time, Price hoped that a quick and dazzling academic paper would pave the way for profitable magazine sales.

Price's key insight had been to see that the genetically optimal behavior for an animal could depend on the behavior of other animals. In a population made up of animals genetically programmed to make war, for example, an animal programmed to retreat from a threat might actually be at an advantage. On the other hand, in a population of less aggressive males, a confrontational male would have the advantage. Price had titled his paper "Antlers, Intraspecific Combat, and Altruism" and sent it off to *Nature* on the last day of July 1968. The following February, he learned that *Nature* had accepted the article, provided it was shortened. But several years passed, and Price never bothered to undertake the revision.

As it happened, the reviewer of Price's paper had been John Maynard Smith, the head of the biology department at the newly created University of Sussex. Maynard Smith saw the potential of Price's unpublished idea, and he wanted to use it in a paper he was writing. In 1971, he wrote a letter asking for permission to thank Price for showing him an "unpublished manuscript." Price wrote back that he would rather Maynard Smith referred to a discussion between them and not a manuscript. "If one mentions an unpublished manuscript," Price explained, somewhat mysteriously, "then someone might wonder whether it was used with permission."

Price's concern was a delicate reference to a long-running, acrimonious dispute between Maynard Smith and Hamilton, whose paper on nepotistic altruism Maynard Smith had reviewed for the *Journal of Theoretical Biology* a few years earlier. It was Hamilton's belief that Maynard Smith had in effect stolen his idea. "His account of the matter," Price explained to Maynard Smith in the fall of 1972, "is that you refereed his 1964 paper for the *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, and required a major revision...that caused a nine-month delay in publication and meanwhile you sent *Nature* a letter with the term 'kin selection' that has received much of the credit for the idea."

"I seem to have this fate of getting ideas from other people's manuscripts when I referee them," the genial, white-haired Maynard Smith explains today. Asked about

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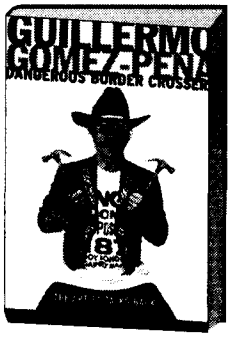

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Hamilton in particular, he is somewhat more defensive: "I wasn't trying to steal his idea, or I don't think I was, so it wasn't conscious." At first, Price doubted Maynard Smith's integrity and suspected him of delaying the "Antlers" paper as he had Hamilton's. But he changed his mind after meeting Maynard Smith. In fact, Maynard Smith was scrupulous about crediting Price—he offered to make Price a co-author of the paper he was writing.

In the fall of 1972, "The Logic of Animal Conflict," co-written by John Maynard Smith and George Price, was accepted by *Nature*. On receiving this news, Price wrote to Maynard Smith that "I think this is the happiest and best outcome of refereeing I've ever had: to become co-author with the referee of a much better paper than I could have written by myself." The paper was one of the first to set forth the ideas of evolutionary game theory, ideas that in the years since have been used to analyze everything from reciprocal grooming in African antelopes to egg swapping among hermaphroditic fish.

IN JUNE 1972, the three-year grant that Price had obtained from the Science Research Council came to an end, and he chose not to seek to renew it. He preferred to give more time to his Christian work and less to mathematical genetics. By the fall, Price had decided to live according to his literal interpretation of the teaching of Jesus. Inspired by Jesus' advice in the Sermon on the Mount to take no heed of the morrow, Price was pushing himself to the brink of disaster. He was almost joyous in anticipation of the extreme deprivation that his faith had brought upon him. "I am now down to exactly fifteen pence," he wrote to Maynard Smith that October. "I look forward eagerly to when that fifteen pence will be gone."

A month later, Price's diet consisted of one pint of milk a day, and he was weak from malnutrition. He stopped taking the thyroxine pills that his thyroid cancer had rendered necessary to his survival. Price believed that if God wanted him to continue living, He would provide the missing hormone. In early December, Price seems to have attempted suicide; in any case, he ended up in a hospital. An alert doctor noticed that he was suffering from myxedema, a result of his thyroxine deficiency, and provided the missing hormone without informing the patient. Taking this as a sign that he was meant to go on living, Price followed the doctor's orders and started taking his pills again.

Price made his final revisions to "The Logic of Animal Conflict" the following February. In a cover letter, he explained to Maynard Smith that he had made a few changes to accommodate his newfound belief in creationism. "I think I found wordings that you won't object to, and that won't shock *Nature*'s readers by making them suspect what I believe," he wrote.

Later that month, Price's religious crisis deepened. In what he described as "an encounter with Jesus," he saw that he had misunderstood the real nature of Christianity and that his true duty was the care and love of people rather than biblical study. He began to devote himself to the needy. He helped out at various old people's homes and gave away all his money to homeless alcoholics on the street, often

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INITIALLY, PRICE FEARED THAT MAYNARD SMITH WOULD STEAL HIS IDEAS. BUT IN THE END, THE TWO HAPPILY CO-AUTHORED THE PAPER THAT LAUNCHED EVOLUTIONARY GAME THEORY.

inviting them to stay in his flat. He also set out to make amends for the failures in his private life, apologizing to his elder daughter, Annamarie, for deserting her and being a poor father. For a short period, he hoped to remarry his former wife, Julia, and reunite the family in London.

Toward the end of June 1973, Price gave up his comfortable flat and lived as an itinerant. Once the model IBM employee, short-haired and suited, Price now let his hair grow out and dressed in sneakers and colorful shirts with an aluminum cross around his neck. He gave away the last of his possessions, including his watch and coat, and lived hand to mouth. In a letter to Hamilton, he explained that he was living according to Luke 6:30: "Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask not again."

Elizabeth Mansell, who worked as a manager of an old people's home where Price volunteered, recalls his arriving on Christmas Eve 1973 "like an angel coming in." She and Price stayed up past midnight wrapping Christmas presents for the old people, and she overslept the next morning. Rushing down in a panic, she found Price had fed and dressed all twenty-one residents.

In the little time that remained after doing his Christian work, Price continued his genetics research at the Galton Labs, where Cedric Smith, his first sponsor, had procured him a one-year Medical Research Council stipend. But by the end of the year, he was forced to avoid the lab because his charity cases were causing disturbances there. In one incident, a belligerent alco-

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holic (whose abused wife Price had been protecting) pissed publicly on the front steps of the genetics building, smashed a bike lamp, and scattered the contents of a student's satchel while shouting obscenities. Fortunately, Price's recent paper with Maynard Smith in *Nature* had earned him credit with the lab authorities. As he wrote to his daughter Annamarie, "I expect that one cover-illustrated lead article in *Nature* compensates for one urination at the front entrance to the building."

In March 1974, Price took up temporary residence in the home of an elderly woman whom he'd helped. By keeping his whereabouts secret from his charity cases, he hoped to get some work done on a joint project on sexual selection with Hamilton. In June, he took a job as a night office cleaner. In a letter to Hamilton, he wrote, "I thought it was about the first honest work I'd done in my life—working for others rather than for my own amusement or advance." In August, Price gave up his night job and moved into a commune located in six deserted buildings a mile north of his first flat.

This move would mark the last major transition in his life. He wrote to his daughter Kathleen that after the summer's low in money and social prestige, he was "heading back up" and had started acquiring possessions again, which he was now slower to give away. He wrote to Hamilton that he believed "Jesus wants me to do less about helping others and give more attention to sorting out my own problems." To another friend he wrote that honesty perhaps meant confessing to "one's deepest selfish desires." He had fallen in love with a woman in his commune, and he hoped to move back to the States. In November, he confided to his brother, Edison, that he had given up his social work, returned to a more conventional Christianity, and was considering marriage.

Meanwhile, Price was beginning to receive some long-overdue recognition. Five years after their New York meeting, Richard Lewontin wrote Price: "It has taken me a long time to come around to understanding the work you have been doing, which I was too stupid to appreciate when you first showed it to me." In October, Price also received a long and detailed letter from the eminent American population geneticist James Crow. Like Lewontin, Crow expressed chagrin at having been so slow to appreciate the significance of Price's work.

Just before Christmas, Price visited the Hamilton family for a little more than a week at their home outside London. When he left on December 19, he seemed to have recovered much of his good spirits, and Hamilton had almost persuaded him to resume full-time work in genetics. The Hamiltons were going to spend Christmas in Ireland, but it was agreed that Price would stay with them again after the New Year. However, on his return to London, Price's spirits dropped precipitously. On January 2, one of his Christian acquaintances wrote to urge him to contact the Samaritans. But Price's life had spun out of control. He was found dead in his squatter's tenement on January 6, 1975. The nail scissors he had used to cut his throat were on the floor beside him.

THE scientific community has been slow to appreciate Price's contributions, perhaps

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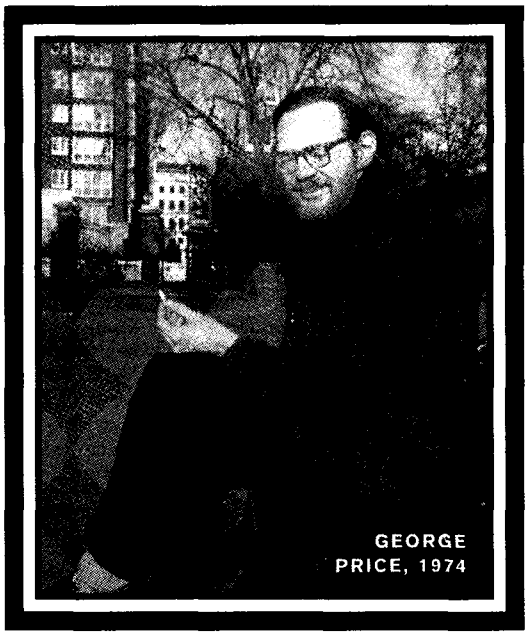
because he never pursued academic recognition strenuously. The application of Price's covariance formula to group selection, for example, has far-reaching implications, but Price never drew attention to them. Before his own death this spring, Hamilton said, "It's as if you've discovered the calculus and put it into one of your obscure papers but never explained to people how useful it was." In a 1975 paper, Hamilton tried to popularize Price's cryptic treatment of the subject. But Hamilton's paper got little attention, and Price's genuinely novel approach remained largely overlooked.


GEORGE PRICE, 1974

That may be changing. In 1995, twenty years after Price's death, the theoretical biologist Steven Frank of the University of California at Irvine wrote a paper reviewing Price's remarkable contributions to evolutionary theory in the *Journal of Theoretical Biology*. The journal also presented a previously unpublished manuscript by Price giving a complete account of his unified theory of selection mathematics. (Two other complete Price manuscripts remain to be published.) Price's equation also played a prominent role in *Unto Others*, an important new book on altruism by David Sober and David Sloan Wilson.

For his groundbreaking insight into the evolution of altruism, Price merits a special place in the history of evolutionary biology. The painful irony is that his struggle to extinguish all selfish motives in his own life nearly prevented him from achieving it. In *Narrow Roads of Gene Land*, Hamilton recalled a conversation between them that took place when Hamilton was first beginning to appreciate how Price's discovery might change the understanding of group selection. "I thought you would see that," Price said.

"Then why aren't you working on it yourself, George?" Hamilton asked.

"Oh, yes. Cedric wants me to also.... But I have so many other things to do," Price replied. "Population genetics is not my main work, as you know. But perhaps I should pray, see if I am mistaken."

James Schwartz is a writer who lives in Brookline, Massachusetts. His last article for *Lingua Franca*, "Oh My Darwin!" appeared in the November 1999 issue.

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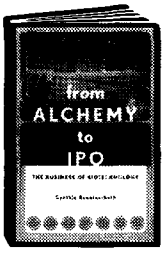

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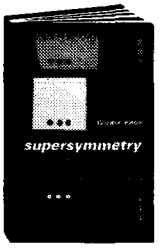

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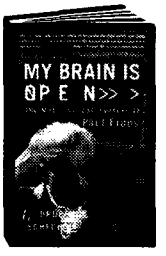

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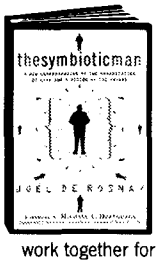

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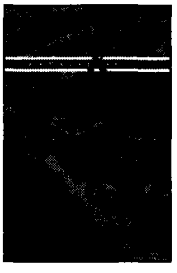

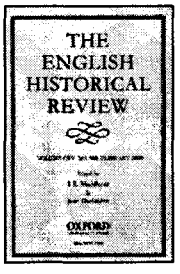

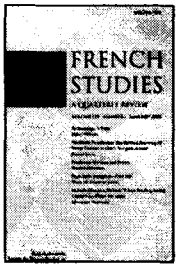

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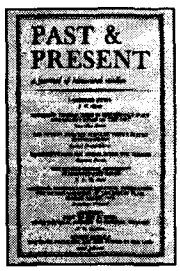

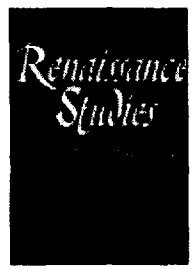

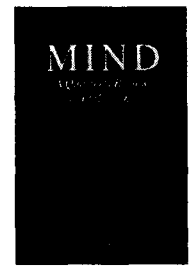

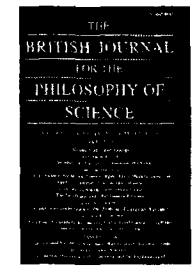

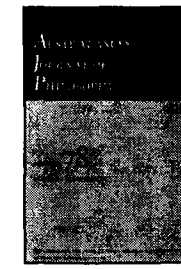

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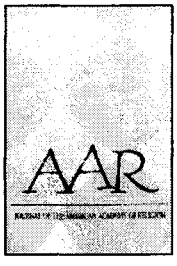

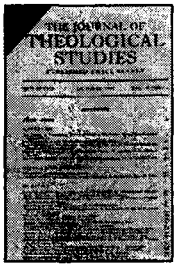

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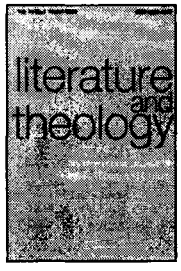

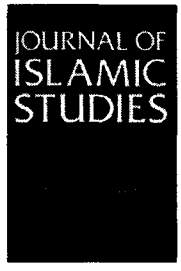

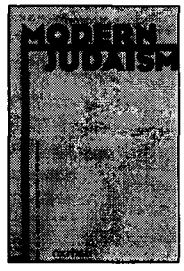

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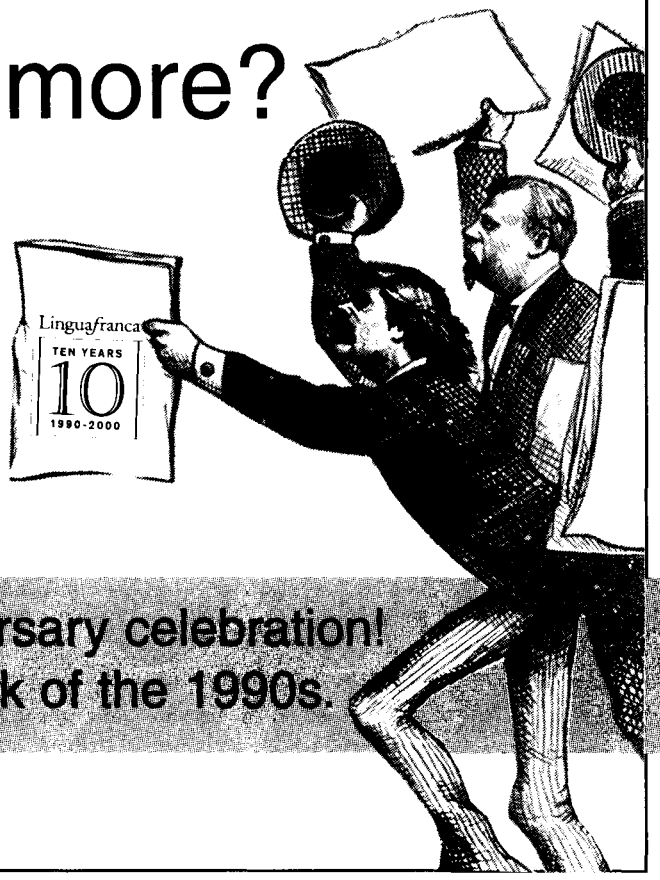

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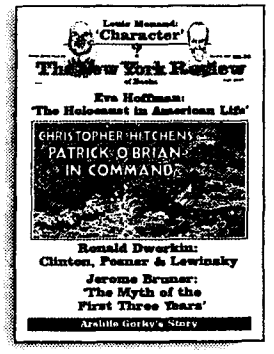

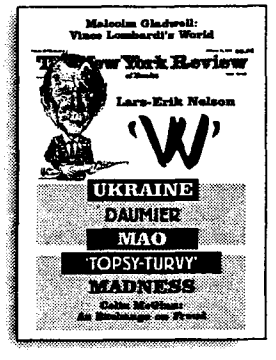

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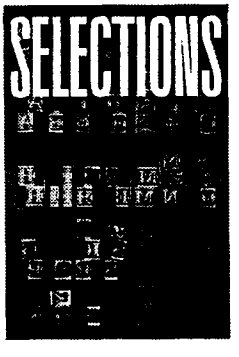

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continued from page 5

with the bones of failed utopian communities." That conclusion ignores such examples as the Icarian communities (life span 58 years), the Amana Society (89 years), the Harmony Society (100 years), the Shakers (over 200 years), and the Hutterites (472 years). More than eighty intentional communities active today have been around longer than Oneida's 32 years. I would invite Professor Packer to attend the next annual meeting of the Communal Studies Association to learn more about communal life spans and prosperity.

TIMOTHY MILLER
Professor and Chair
Department of Religious Studies
University of Kansas

SPEAK EASY

In his discussion of Esperanto ["A Farewell to Esperanto?" May/June], Hal Cohen makes three statements about C.K. Ogden's Basic English and three errors: (1) George Orwell did not make sport of Basic with his Newspeak. Quite the opposite: He went on record in support of it, giving talks on the radio in Basic. (2) Basic was not "essentially English" but English with new rules to keep the sense of any statement made in it under control. (It is because of this that Cohen and others see Newspeak as an attack on Basic.) (3) Cohen says that "Basic never caught on," but in fact there were schools and organizations for teaching it in thirty countries in the 1930s.

"Standard English speakers felt constrained by Basic," says Cohen. This is a natural reaction, but getting past it has its rewards: clear talk and clear writing. Is Basic hard or simple, strange or natural? You be the judge. All we have said here is in Basic English.

W. TERRENCE GORDON
Professor of French
Dalhousie University
ERIC W. ROBINSON
Basic English
Project Coordinator
Burlington, Ontario

Hal Cohen responds: The possibilities of Basic English did intrigue Orwell in the early 1940s. But many commentators have noted the similarities between Basic and Newspeak. Perhaps he had second thoughts.

THE NEW LEFT'S FAVORITE NAZI

Saul Anton's story on the love affair of the left with the writings of Carl Schmitt ["Enemies: A Love Story," Inside Publishing, May/June] is long overdue but, while well intentioned, slightly wide of the mark. It is not despite but because of Schmitt's reactionary record that "a number of leftists have taken a shine to him."

For some left-wing advocates of the leading Nazi jurist, it is not that Schmitt was a "smart" adversary from whom we can still learn but that he was a confirmed (a) totalitarian, (b) anti-Semite, (c) statist, and (d) above all, enemy to liberal democracy. By hanging on to the coattails of Herr Schmitt, certain elements in the far left have found common cause with kinsmen in the far right. This coming together full circle is simply the intellectual excretion of the Lenora Fulani–Pat Buchanan alliance at the political level.

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ
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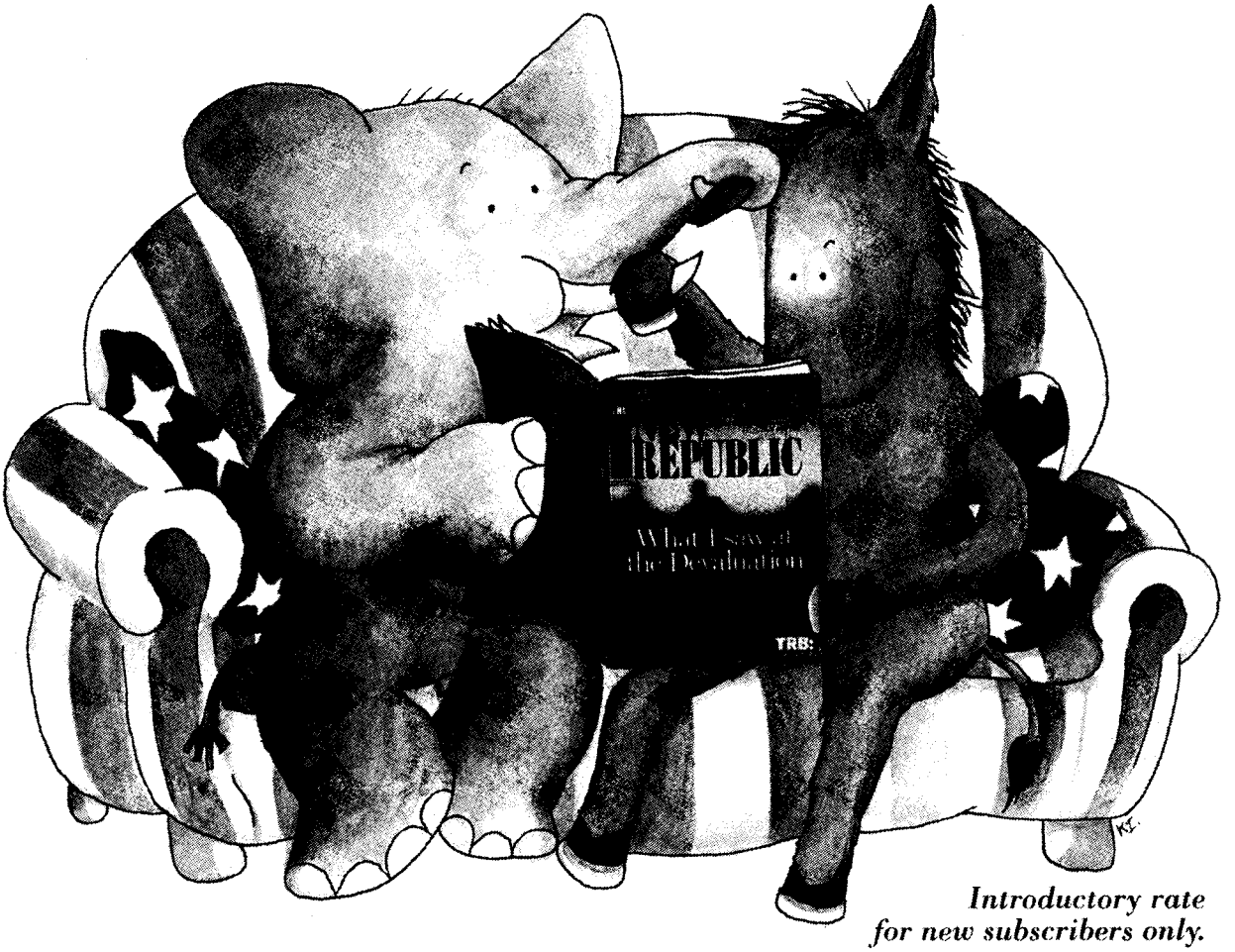

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CONFERENCES

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Cambridge, MA: September 15–17, 2000

DREAMS OF INTERPRETATION

"Dreams of Interpretation/Interpretation of Dreams" commemorates the 100th anniversary of the publication of Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*—an epochal book that has left an indelible mark on the last century. This conference looks both to the past and the future in its assessment of the Freudian legacy and seeks to address the following questions: What is the status of psychoanalytic theory today? At what new understandings of its history have we arrived? What is the future of psychoanalysis and its interventions in the clinic and in a wider cultural field? Contact: C. Liu, J. Mowitt, T. Pepper, University of Minnesota, Humanities Institute, 103 Nolte, 315 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455; Web: http://cla.umn.edu/umhi; E-mail Jakki Spicer <spic0015@tc.umn.edu>.

Minneapolis, MN: October 5–7, 2000

THE MODERN PRESIDENCY: FDR TO CLINTON

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Chicago, IL: October 13–14, 2000

METAMORPHOSES 2000

The Humanities and Sciences Department of the School of Visual Arts announces the Fourteenth Annual National Conference on Liberal Arts and the Education of Artists. This year's focus topic is "Metamorphoses 2000: Expressive Technology, Art & the Humanities." The keynote speaker will be Jaron Lanier, Artist and Scientist. This two-day conference will examine how technologies used for art and communication challenge definitions of identity, physical and personal space, authorship and community while seeming to pit technique against creativity. The conference will take place on October 18–20, 2000 at the Algonquin Hotel, New York City. Registration is $245; after September 15, $255. For information, contact Dr. Maryhelen Hendricks, director, School of Visual Arts, 209 East 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010; T: (212) 592-2625; or visit our web site at http://www.schoolofvisualarts.edu.

New York, NY: October 18–20, 2000

ART, BODY, MIND: AN INTEGRATION

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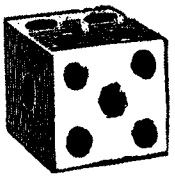
LUCKY NUMBERS

IS IT WISE TO BET ON MATHEMATICAL PROGRESS?

ALTHOUGH I, FOR ONE, would be reluctant to wager real money on whether a unified theory of physics will be discovered before the decade is out, or on whether the mind-body problem will be dispatched by the end of the century, others are more daring. A member of the Lloyd's of London insurance syndicate, for example, has recently bet that a certain mathematical conjecture will not be proved before March 15, 2002.

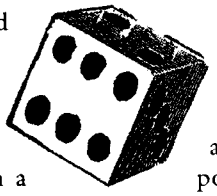
The proposition—Goldbach's conjecture—is one of the oldest famous unsolved problems in mathematics. It was first stated in a letter that Christian Goldbach (1690–1764)—a Prussian math enthusiast who served as tutor to Peter II, the teenage czar of Russia—sent in 1742 to the great mathematician Leonhard Euler. Goldbach had noticed that any even number he examined could be written as the sum of two prime numbers. (A number is prime if it has no divisors other than itself and 1.) Thus, for example, the even number 24 can be written as the sum of 11 and 13, which are both primes. Perhaps, Goldbach idly guessed, this is true for all even numbers. Euler responded that it probably was but he had no idea how to go about proving it.

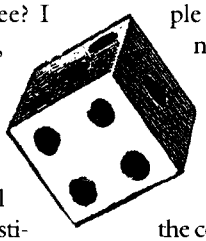
Although it is not of central importance to mathematics, the conjecture has captured the imagination of many mathematicians, professional and amateur, because of its seeming simplicity. Recently, it caught the eye of Apostolos Doxiadis, a Greek film and theater director who studied mathematics at Columbia University and the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. His novel *Uncle Petros and Goldbach's Conjecture* was published in Greece in 1992—the 250th anniversary of Goldbach's conjecture. Earlier this year it was brought out in England by Faber and Faber and in the United States by Bloomsbury USA. To promote the novel, these two publishing houses came up with a good gimmick: They would give a prize of one million dollars to anyone who could achieve the feat that obsesses the novel's protagonist—prove Goldbach's conjecture. They stipulated that the proof must be submitted by March 2002 and published in a "reputable" mathematics journal by March 2004.



But what if someone out there actually succeeded in doing this? To indemnify themselves against that ruinous possibility—a million dollars is still a lot of money in the book trade—the publishers went to Lloyd's of London. There they found an underwriter who was willing to take on this contingent liability—for a fee, of course. Although the editors I spoke with at Faber and Faber would not divulge the underwriter's identity, they did say that the cost of the insurance policy was "in the tens of thousands of dollars." So in effect the underwriter made a bet against the solution of Goldbach's conjecture: If it goes unsolved by 2002, his profit will be in the "tens of thousands of dollars"; if it is solved by the deadline, his loss will be a million dollars minus that five-figure sum.

To repeat my opening question: Is such a bet wise? How does one go about computing the odds of an intellectual breakthrough? Well, if Lloyd's of London is comfortable writing policies on everything from shipping accidents to (reportedly) Jennifer Lopez's derriere, there is no reason why Goldbach's conjecture should daunt them. Judging from the policy's terms, the underwriter must have put the odds against Goldbach being proved at around 100 to 1. Would a mathematician agree? I called Joe Buhler, a distinguished number theorist who is currently deputy director of the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute at Berkeley. "We're just waiting for a new idea, not a whole new branch of mathematics," he told me. "I'd say there's at least a fifty-fifty chance that Goldbach's conjecture will be proved in the next fifty years." These odds, a little arithmetic shows, roughly jibe with those arrived at by the Lloyd's underwriter.





Even though Goldbach's conjecture has been recalcitrant to proof over the last two and a half centuries, most mathematicians nonetheless believe that the proposition is true—that each of the infinity of even numbers can indeed be expressed as the sum of two primes. Still, not everything that is true in mathematics can be proved. From Gödel's incompleteness theorem we know that in any formal system of arithmetic there are infinitely many propositions that are neither provable nor disprovable. Could Goldbach's conjecture be one of them? That is what the dispirited protagonist of *Uncle Petros and Goldbach's Conjecture* begins to suspect. Had he (or his novelist-creator) been cleverer, he might have seen a silver lining here. If Goldbach's conjecture could be shown to be undecidable—neither provable nor disprovable—then this would be tantamount to proving it true! For if it is false, there must be some counterexample to it; that is, some even number that could not be written as the sum of two prime numbers. But such a counterexample would constitute a disproof of the conjecture—thereby contradicting its undecidability.

Would such a "meta-proof" of Goldbach's conjecture qualify for the million- dollar prize? The folks at Faber and Faber were a little nonplussed when I raised the possibility. They did, however, warm to my suggestion that, in the event the money did have to be paid out, it should go to the winner as a pair of checks, one for $499,943, the other for $500,057—two prime numbers that, à la Goldbach, sum to an even million.

JIM HOLT

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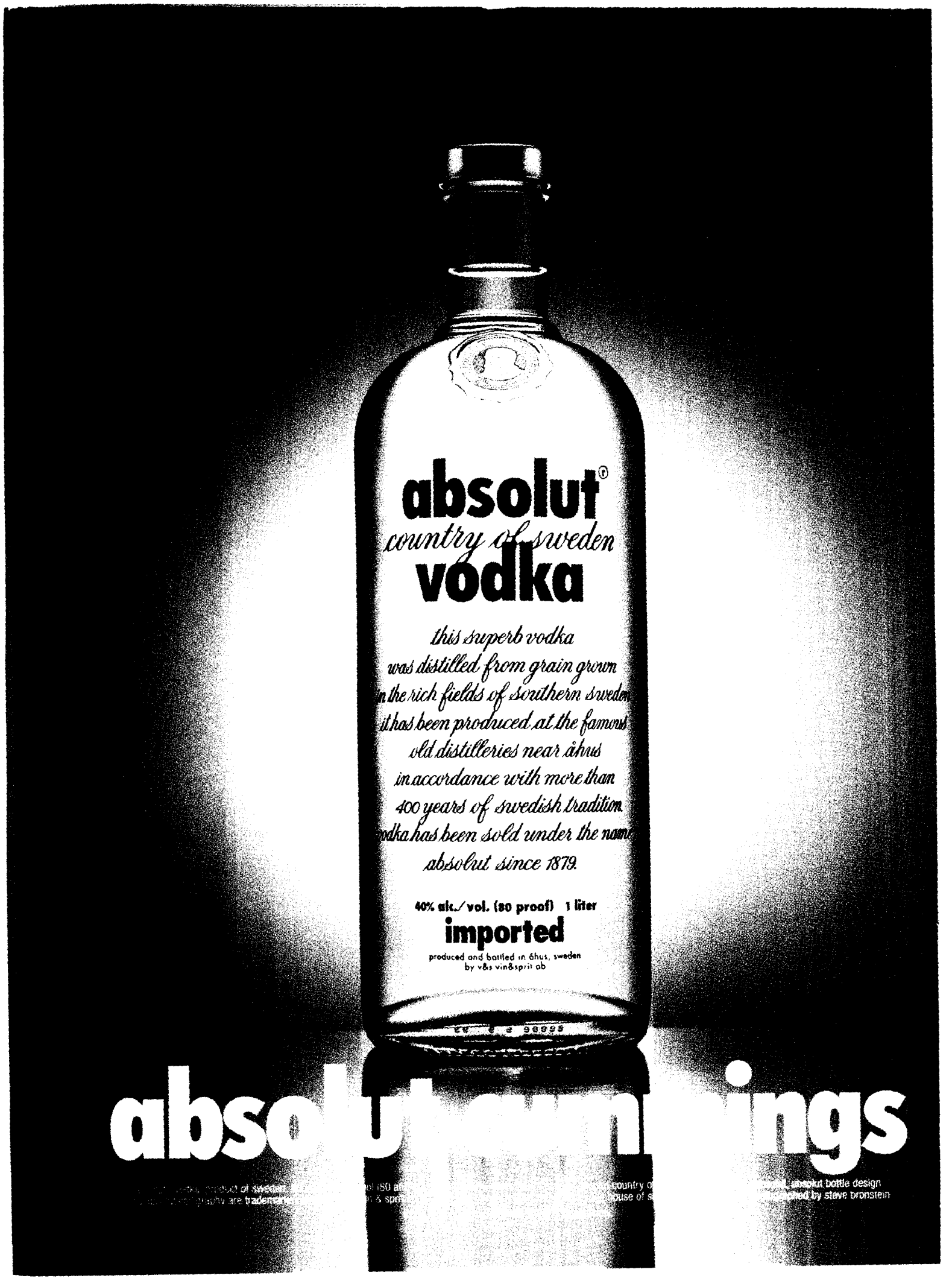

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